This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

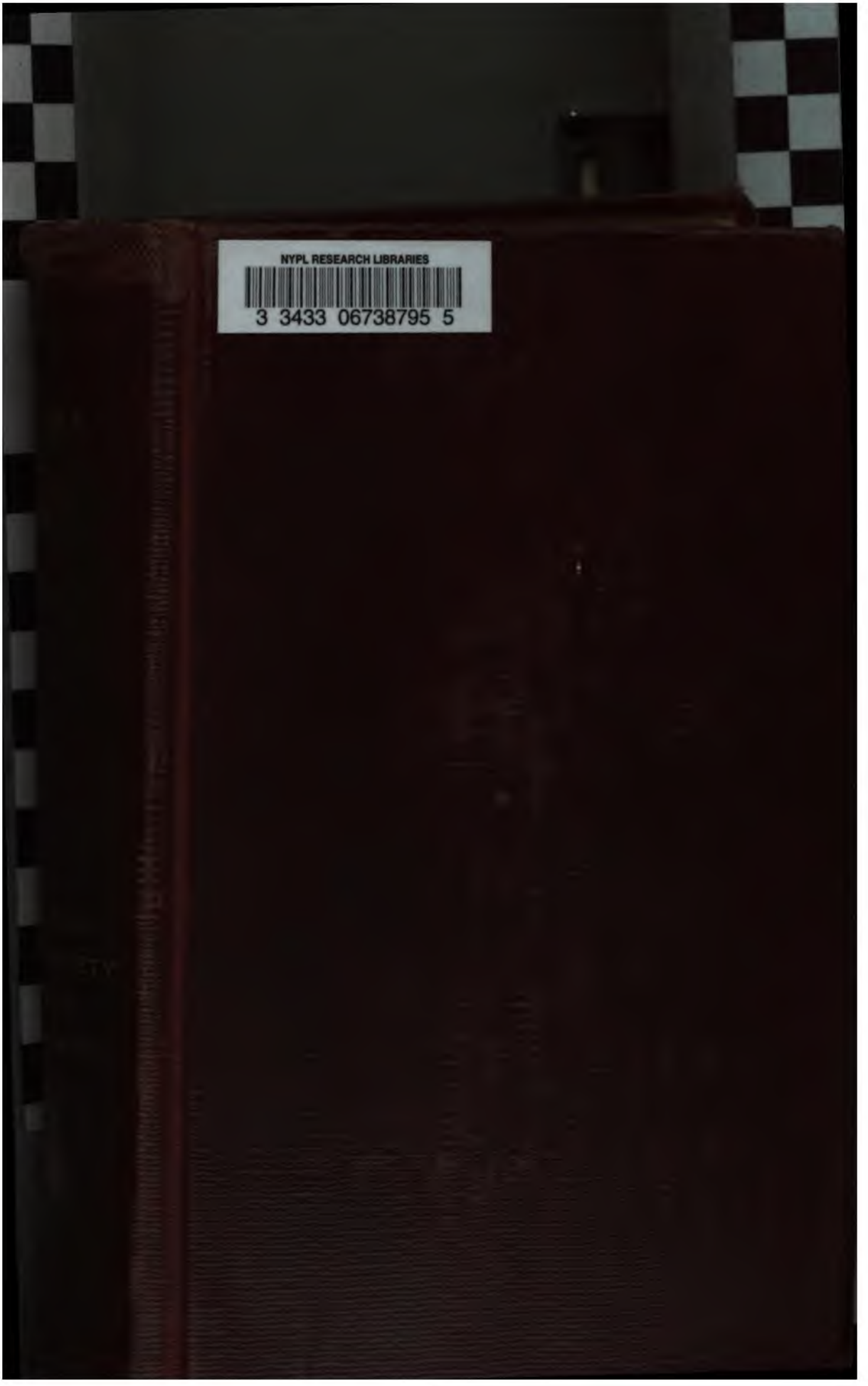
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`


NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 06738795 5

THE WORKS
OF
HENRIK IBSEN

THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH
PILLARS OF SOCIETY
ROSMERSHOLM
THE LADY FROM THE SEA

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY
WILLIAM ARCHER

PRINTED BY ARRANGEMENT WITH
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

WILLEY BOOK COMPANY
NEW YORK

YORK
IBRARY
394A
NOX AND
INDATIONS
25 L

Copyright, 1911, 1912, by Charles Scribner's Sons

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION TO "THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH" . .	3
"THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH"	13
Translated by WILLIAM ARCHER	
INTRODUCTION TO "PILLARS OF SOCIETY" . . .	267
"PILLARS OF SOCIETY"	281
Translated by WILLIAM ARCHER	

THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH

THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH

INTRODUCTION*

After the momentous four years of his first visit to Italy, to which we owe *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, Ibsen left Rome in May, 1868, visited Florence, and then spent the summer at Berchtesgaden in southern Bavaria. There he was busy "mentally wrestling" with the new play which was to take shape as *De Unges Forbund* (*The League of Youth*); but he did not begin to put it on paper until, after a short stay at Munich, he settled down in Dresden, in the early autumn. Thence he wrote to his publisher, Hegel, on October 31: "My new work is making rapid progress. . . . The whole outline is finished and written down. The first act is completed, the second will be in the course of a week, and by the end of the year I hope to have the play ready. It will be in prose, and in every way adapted for the stage. The title is *The League of Youth; or, The Almighty & Co.*, a comedy, in five acts." At Hegel's suggestion he omitted the second title, "though," he wrote, "it could have given offence to no one *who had read the play*."

This was his first play in modern prose, and the medium did not come easy to him. Six or seven years earlier, he wrote the opening scenes of *Love's Comedy* in prose, but was dissatisfied with the effect, and recast the dialogue in rhymed verse. Having now outgrown his youthful

* Copyright, 1906, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

romanticism, and laid down, in *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, the fundamental positions of his criticism of life, he felt that to carry that criticism into detail he must come to close quarters with reality; and to that end he required a suppler instrument than verse. He must cultivate, as he afterwards[1] put it, "the very much more difficult art of writing the genuine, plain language spoken in real life." Probably the mastery of this new art cost him more effort than he anticipated, for, instead of having the play finished by the end of 1868, he did not despatch the manuscript to Copenhagen until March, 1869. It was published on September 30 of that year.

The preliminary sketches for *The League of Youth*, though they occupy forty pages of the *Literary Remains*, are fragmentary and of small importance. Ibsen evidently conceived the play from the first very much on the lines which it ultimately followed. Even the names of the characters in the first draft remain almost unaltered in the finished play, except that Stensgård was originally to have been "Stenborg," Madam Rundholmen "Madam Bagholmen," and Selma "Margrete." The fantastic dialogue between Selma-Margrete, her husband and Stensgård, near the beginning of the second act, is clearly indicated in the draft; but there is no trace of Selma's outburst in the third act. This probably does not mean, however, that the development of her character was an afterthought, but only that he did not happen to make any first study for the scene, or that it has not been preserved. We find several allusions to the sub-title originally contemplated, *The Almighty & Co.*; indeed it is

[1] Letter to Lucie Wolf, May, 1883. *Correspondence*, Letter 171.

introduced in quite the orthodox fashion in what may not unfairly be called the "tag." The chief interest of the fragments, in fact, lies in the proof they afford that Ibsen was at this time thoroughly steeped in the current conventions of theatrical manufacture. They also show that he had not yet got over his indignation at what he thought the poltroonery of Norway with reference to the Danish War. He intended to drag in a satiric allusion to it in the second act; but he wisely changed his mind, and used the idea in a poem, entitled *Faith's Foundation.*

While the comedy was still in process of conception, Ibsen had written to his publisher: "This new, *peaceable* work is giving me great pleasure." It thus appears that he considered it less polemical in its character than the poems which had immediately preceded it. If his intentions were pacific, they were entirely frustrated. The play was regarded as a violent and wanton attack on the Norwegian Liberal party, while Stensgård was taken for a personal lampoon on Björnson. Its first performance at the Christiania Theatre (October 18, 1869) passed quietly enough; but at the second and third performances an organised opposition took the field, and disturbances amounting almost to a riot occurred. Public feeling soon calmed down, and the play (the first prose comedy of any importance in Norwegian literature) became one of the most popular pieces in the repertory of the theatre. But it led to an estrangement from Björnson and the Liberal party which was not healed for many a day—not, indeed, until *Ghosts* had shown the Norwegian public the folly of attempting to make party capital out of the works of a poet who stood far above party.

The estrangement from Björnson had begun some time before the play appeared. A certain misunderstanding had followed the appearance of *Peer Gynt*,[1] and had been deepened by political differences. Björnson had become an ardent National Liberal, with leanings towards Republicanism; Ibsen was not at all a Republican (he deeply offended Björnson by accepting orders and decorations), and his political sympathies, while not of a partisan nature, were mainly "Scandinavian"—that is to say, directed towards a closer union of the three Scandinavian kingdoms. Distance, and the evil offices of gossiping friends, played their part in begetting dissension. Ibsen's last friendly letter to Björnson (of these years) was written in the last days of 1867; in the first days of 1869, while he was actually busied with *The League of Youth*, we find him declining to contribute to a Danish magazine for the reason (among others) that Björnson was to be one of its joint editors.

The news of the stormy reception of his comedy reached Ibsen in Egypt, where, as the guest of the Khedive, he was attending the opening of the Suez Canal. He has recorded the incident in a poem, *At Port Said*. On his return to Dresden he wrote to Hegel (December 14, 1869): "The reception of *The League of Youth* pleases me very much; for the disapprobation I was prepared, and it would have been a disappointment to me if there had been none. But what I was not prepared for was that Björnson should feel himself attacked by the play, as rumour says he does. Is this really the case? He must surely see that it is not himself I have had in mind, but

[1] See *Correspondence*, Letters 44 and 45.

his pernicious and 'lie-steeped' clique who have served me as models. However, I will write to him to-day or to-morrow, and I hope that the affair, in spite of all differences, will end in a reconciliation." The intended letter does not appear to have been written; nor would it, probably, have produced the desired effect, for Björnson's resentment was very deep. He had already (in November) written a poem to Johan Sverdrup, the leader of the Liberal party, in which he deplored the fact that "the sacred grove of poetry no longer afforded sanctuary against assassination," or as the Norwegian word vigorously expresses it, "sneak-murder." Long afterwards, in 1881, he explained what he meant by this term: "It was not the portrayal of contemporary life and known personages that I called assassination. It was the fact that *The League of Youth* sought to represent our young Liberal party as a gang of ambitious speculators, whose patriotism was as empty as their phraseology; and particularly that prominent men were first made clearly recognisable, and then had false hearts and shady characters foisted upon them." It is difficult to see, indeed, how Ibsen can have expected Björnson to distinguish very clearly between an attack on his "lie-steeped clique" and a lampoon on himself. Even Stensgård's religious phraseology, the confidence with which he claims God as a member of his party, was at that time characteristic of Björnson. The case, in fact, seems to have been very like that of the portraiture of Leigh Hunt in Harold Skimpole. Both Dickens and Ibsen had unconsciously taken more from their respective models than they intended. They imagined, perhaps, that the features which did not be-

long to the original would conceal the likeness, whereas their actual effect was only to render the portraits libellous.

Eleven years passed before Björnson and Ibsen were reconciled. In 1880 (after the appearance of *A Doll's House* and before that of *Ghosts*) Björnson wrote in an American magazine: "I think I have a pretty thorough acquaintance with the dramatic literature of the world, and I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that Henrik Ibsen possesses more dramatic power than any other play-writer of our day. The fact that I am not always partial to the style of his work makes me all the more certain that I am right in my judgment of him."

The League of Youth soon became very popular in Norway, and it had considerable success in Sweden and Denmark. It was acted with notable excellence at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen. Outside of Scandinavia it has never taken any hold of the stage. At the date of its appearance Ibsen was still quite unknown, even in Germany; and when he became known, its technique was already antiquated. It has been acted once or twice both in Germany and England, and has proved very amusing on the stage; but it is essentially an experimental, transitional work. The poet is trying his tools.

The technical influence of Scribe and his school is apparent in every scene. Ibsen's determination not to rest content with the conventions of that school may already be discerned, indeed, in his disuse of the soliloquy and the aside; but, apart from these flagrant absurdities, he permits himself to employ almost all the devices of Scribe. Note, for example, how much of the action

arises from sheer misunderstanding. The whole second act turns upon the Chamberlain's misunderstanding of the bent of Stensgård's diatribe in the first act. As the Chamberlain is deliberately misled by his daughter and Fieldbo, the misunderstanding is not, perhaps, technically inadmissible. Yet it has to be maintained by very artificial means. Why, one may ask, does not Fieldbo, in his long conversation with Stensgård, in the second act, warn him of the thin ice on which he is skating? There is no sufficient reason, except that the great situation at the end of the act would thus be rendered impossible. It is in the fourth act, however, that the methods of the vaudevillist are most apparent. It is one string of blunders of the particular type which the French significantly call "quiproquos." Some arise through the quite diabolical genius for malicious wire-pulling developed by old Lundestad; but most of them are based upon that deliberate and elaborate vagueness of expression on the part of the characters which is the favourite artifice of the professor of theatrical sleight-of-hand. We are not even spared the classic quiproquo of the proposal by proxy mistaken for a proposal direct—Stensgård's overtures to Madam Rundholmen on behalf of Bastian being accepted by her as an offer on his own behalf. We are irresistibly reminded of Mrs. Bardell's fatal misunderstanding of Mr. Pickwick's intentions. All this, to be sure, is excellent farce, but there is no originality in the expedients by which it is carried on. Equally conventional, and equally redolent of Scribe, is the conduct of the fifth act. The last drop of effect is wrung out of the quiproquos with an almost mathematical accuracy.

We are reminded of a game at puss-in-the-four-corners, in which Stensgård tries every corner in turn, only to find himself at last left out in the cold. Then, as the time approaches to ring down the curtain, every one is seized with a fever of amiability, the Chamberlain abandons all his principles and prejudices, even to the point of subscribing for twenty copies of Aslaksen's newspaper, and the whole thing becomes scarcely less unreal than one of the old-comedy endings in which the characters stand in a semicircle while each delivers a couplet of the epilogue. It is difficult to believe that the facile optimism of this conclusion could at any time have satisfied the mind which, only twelve years later, conceived the picture of Oswald Alving shrinking together in his chair and babbling, "Mother—give me the sun."

But, while we realise with what extraordinary rapidity and completeness Ibsen outgrew this phase of his art, we must not overlook the genuine merits of this brilliant comedy. With all its faults, it was an advance on the technique of its day, and was hailed as such by a critic so penetrating as George Brandes. Placing ourselves at the point of view of the time, we may perhaps say that its chief defect is its marked inequality of style. The first act is purely preparatory; the fifth act as we have noted, is a rather perfunctory winding-up. The real play lies in the intervening acts; and each of these belongs to a different order of art. The second act is a piece of high comedy, quite admirable in its kind; the third act, both in tone and substance, verges upon melodrama; while the fourth act is nothing but rattling farce. Even from the Scribe point of view, this jumping from key to key is

a fault. Another objection which Scribe would probably have urged is that several of Fieldbo's speeches, and the attitude of the Chamberlain towards him, are, on the face of them, incomprehensible, and are only retrospectively explained. The poetics of that school forbid all reliance on retrospect, perhaps because they do not contemplate the production of any play about which any human being would care to think twice.

The third act, though superficially a rather tame interlude between the vigorous second act and the bustling fourth, is in reality the most characteristic of the five. The second act might be signed Augier, and the fourth Labiche; but in the third the coming Ibsen is manifest. The scene between the Chamberlain and Monsen is, in its disentangling of the past, a preliminary study for much of his later work—a premonition, in fact, of his characteristic method. Here, too, in the character of Selma and her outburst of revolt, we have by far the most original feature of the play. In Selma there is no trace of French influence, spiritual or technical. With admirable perspicacity, Dr. Brandes realised from the outset the significance of this figure. "Selma," he wrote, "is a new creation, and her relation to the family might form the subject of a whole drama. But in the play as it stands she has scarcely room to move." The drama which Brandes here foresaw, Ibsen wrote ten years later in *A Doll's House*.

With reference to the phrase "De lokale forhold," here lamely represented by "the local situation," Ibsen has a curious remark in a letter to Markus Grönvold, dated

Stockholm, September 3, 1877. His German translator, he says, has rendered the phrase literally "lokale Verhältnisse"—"which is wrong, because no suggestion of comicality or narrow-mindedness is conveyed by this German expression. The rendering ought to be 'unsere berechtigten Eigenthümlichkeiten,' an expression which conveys the same meaning to Germans as the Norwegian one does to us Scandinavians." This suggestion is, unfortunately, of no help to the English translator, especially when it is remembered in what context Aslaksen uses the phrase "de lokale forhold" in the fifth act of *An Enemy of the People*.

THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH
(1869)

CHARACTERS

CHAMBERLAIN BRATSBERG,[1] *owner of iron-works.*
ERIK BRATSBERG, *his son, a merchant.*
THORA, *his daughter.*
SELMA, *Erik's wife.*
DOCTOR FIELDBO, *physician at the Chamberlain's works.*
STENSGÅRD,[2] *a lawyer.*
MONS MONSEN, *of Stonelee.*[3]
BASTIAN MONSEN, *his son.*
RAGNA, *his daughter.*
HELLE,[4] *student of theology, tutor at Stonelee.*
RINGDAL, *manager of the iron-works.*
ANDERS LUNDESTAD, *landowner.*
DANIEL HEIRE.[5]
MADAM[6] RUNDHOLMEN, *widow of a storekeeper and publican.*
ASLAKSEN, *a printer.*
A MAID-SERVANT AT THE CHAMBERLAIN'S.
A WAITER.
A WAITRESS AT MADAM RUNDHOLMEN'S.
Townspeople, Guests at the Chamberlain's, etc., etc.

The action takes place in the neighbourhood of the iron-works, not far from a market town in Southern Norway.

[1] "Chamberlain" (Kammerherre) is a title conferred by the King of Norway upon men of wealth and position. Hereditary nobility was abolished in 1821.

[2] Pronounce *Staynsgore.*

[3] In the original "Storli."

[4] Pronounce *Hellē.*

[5] Heire (pronounce *Heirē*) = Heron.

[6] Married women and widows of the lower middle-class are addressed as Madam in Norway.

THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH

ACT FIRST

The Seventeenth of May.[1] *A popular fête in the Chamberlain's grounds. Music and dancing in the background. Coloured lights among the trees. In the middle, somewhat towards the back, a rostrum. To the right, the entrance to a large refreshment-tent; before it, a table with benches. In the foreground, on the left, another table, decorated with flowers and surrounded with lounging-chairs.*

A Crowd of People. LUNDESTAD, *with a committee-badge at his button-hole, stands on the rostrum.* RINGDAL, *also with a committee-badge, at the table on the left.*

LUNDESTAD.

. . . Therefore, friends and fellow citizens, I drink to our freedom! As we have inherited it from our fathers, so will we preserve it for ourselves and for our children! Three cheers for the day! Three cheers for the Seventeenth of May!

THE CROWD.

Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!

RINGDAL.

[*As* LUNDESTAD *descends from the rostrum.*] And one cheer more for old Lundestad!

[1] The Norwegian "Independence Day."

SOME OF THE CROWD.

[*Hissing.*] Ss! Ss!

MANY VOICES.

[*Drowning the others.*] Hurrah for Lundestad! Long live old Lundestad! Hurrah!

[*The* CROWD *gradually disperses.* MONSEN, *his son* BASTIAN, STENSGÅRD, *and* ASLAKSEN *make their way forward through the throng.*

MONSEN.

'Pon my soul, it's time he was laid on the shelf!

ASLAKSEN.

It was the local situation[1] he was talking about! Ho-ho!

MONSEN.

He has made the same speech year after year as long as I can remember. Come over here.

STENSGÅRD.

No, no, not that way, Mr. Monsen. We are quite deserting your daughter.

MONSEN.

Oh, Ragna will find us again.

[1] "Local situation" is a very ineffectual rendering of Aslaksen's phrase, "lokale forholde"—German, *Verhältnisse*—but there seems to be no other which will fit into all the different contexts in which it occurs. It reappears in *An Enemy of the People*, Act v.

BASTIAN.

She's all right; young Helle is with her.

STENSGÅRD.

Helle?

MONSEN.

Yes, Helle. But [*Nudging* STENSGÅRD *familiarly*] you have m e here, you see, and the rest of us. Come on! Here we shall be out of the crowd, and can discuss more fully what——

[*Has meanwhile taken a seat beside the table on the left.*

RINGDAL.

[*Approaching.*] Excuse me, Mr. Monsen—that table is reserved——

STENSGÅRD.

Reserved? For whom?

RINGDAL.

For the Chamberlain's party.

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, confound the Chamberlain's party! There's none of them here.

RINGDAL.

No, but we expect them every minute.

STENSGÅRD.

Then let them sit somewhere else. [*Takes a chair.*

LUNDESTAD.

[*Laying his hand on the chair.*] No, the table is reserved, and there's an end of it.

MONSEN.

[*Rising.*] Come, Mr. Stensgård; there are just as good seats over there. [*Crosses to the right.*] Waiter! Ha, no waiters either. The Committee should have seen to that in time. Oh, Aslaksen, just go in and get us four bottles of champagne. Order the dearest; tell them to put it down to Monsen!

[ASLAKSEN *goes into the tent; the three others seat themselves.*

LUNDESTAD.

[*Goes quietly over to them and addresses* STENSGÅRD.] I hope you won't take it ill——

MONSEN.

Take it ill! Good gracious, no! Not in the least.

LUNDESTAD.

[*Still to* STENSGÅRD.] It's not my doing; it's the Committee that decided——

MONSEN.

Of course. The Committee orders, and we must obey.

LUNDESTAD.

[*As before.*] You see, we are on the Chamberlain's own ground here. He has been so kind as to throw open his park and garden for this evening; so we thought——

STENSGÅRD.

We're extremely comfortable here, Mr. Lundestad—if only people would leave us in peace—the crowd, I mean.

LUNDESTAD.

[*Unruffled.*] Very well; then it's all right.
[*Goes towards the back.*

ASLAKSEN.

[*Entering from the tent.*] The waiter is just coming with the wine. [*Sits.*

MONSEN.

A table apart, under special care of the Committee! And on our Independence Day of all others! There you have a specimen of the way things go.

STENSGÅRD.

But why on earth do you put up with all this, you good people?

MONSEN.

The habit of generations, you see.

ASLAKSEN.

You're new to the district, Mr. Stensgård. If only you knew a little of the local situation——

A WAITER.

[*Brings champagne.*] Was it you that ordered—?

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, certainly; open the bottle.

THE WAITER.

[*Pouring out the wine.*] It goes to your account, Mr. Monsen?

MONSEN.

The whole thing; don't be afraid.

[*The* WAITER *goes.*

MONSEN.

[*Clinks glasses with* STENSGÅRD.] Here's welcome among us, Mr. Stensgård! It gives me great pleasure to have made your acquaintance; I cannot but call it an honour to the district that such a man should settle here. The newspapers have made us familiar with your name, on all sorts of public occasions. You have great gifts of oratory, Mr. Stensgård, and a warm heart for the public weal. I trust you will enter with life and vigour into the—h'm, into the——

ASLAKSEN.

The local situation.

MONSEN.

Oh yes, the local situation. I drink to that.

[*They drink.*

STENSGÅRD.

Whatever I do, I shall certainly put life and vigour into it.

MONSEN.

Bravo! Hear, hear! Another glass in honour of that promise.

STENSGÅRD.

No, stop; I've already——

MONSEN.

Oh, nonsense! Another glass, I say—to seal the bond!

[They clink glasses and drink. During what follows BASTIAN *keeps on filling the glasses as soon as they are empty.*

MONSEN.

However—since we have got upon the subject—I must tell you that it's not the Chamberlain himself that keeps everything under his thumb. No, sir—old Lundestad is the man that stands behind and drives the sledge.

STENSGÅRD.

So I am told, in many quarters. I can't understand how a Liberal like him——

MONSEN.

Lundestad? Do you call Anders Lundestad a Liberal? To be sure, he professed Liberalism in his young days, when he was still at the foot of the ladder. And then he inherited his seat in Parliament from his father. Good Lord! everything runs in families here.

STENSGÅRD.

But there must be some means of putting a stop to all these abuses.

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, damn it all Mr. Stensgård—see if you can't put a stop to them!

STENSGÅRD.

I don't say that I——

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, you! You are just the man. You have the gift of the gab, as the saying goes; and what's more: you have the pen of a ready writer. My paper's at your disposal, you know.

MONSEN.

If anything is to be done, it must be done quickly. The preliminary election[1] comes on in three days now.

STENSGÅRD.

And if you were elected, your private affairs would not prevent your accepting the charge?

MONSEN.

My private affairs would suffer, of course; but if it appeared that the good of the community demanded the sacrifice, I should have to put aside all personal considerations.

STENSGÅRD.

Good; that's good. And you have a party already: that I can see clearly.

MONSEN.

I flatter myself the majority of the younger, go-ahead generation——

[1] The system of indirect election obtains in Norway. The constituencies choose a College of Electors, who, in turn, choose the Members of the Storthing or Parliament. It is the preliminary "Election of Electors" to which Monsen refers.

ASLAKSEN.

H'm, h'm! 'ware spies!

DANIEL HEIRE *enters from the tent; he peers about short-sightedly and approaches.*

HEIRE.

May I beg for the loan of a spare seat; I want to sit over there.

MONSEN.

The benches are fastened here, you see; but won't you take a place at this table?

HEIRE.

Here? At this table? Oh yes, with pleasure. [*Sits.*] Dear, dear! Champagne, I believe.

MONSEN.

Yes; won't you join us in a glass?

HEIRE.

No, thank you! Madam Rundholmen's champagne —— Well, well, just half a glass to keep you company. If only one h a d a glass, now.

MONSEN.

Bastian, go and get one.

BASTIAN.

Oh, Aslaksen, just go and fetch a glass.

[ASLAKSEN *goes into the tent. A pause.*

HEIRE.

Don't let me interrupt you, gentlemen. I wouldn't for the world——! Thanks, Aslaksen. [*Bows to* STENSGÅRD.] A strange face—a recent arrival! Have I the pleasure of addressing our new legal luminary, Mr. Stensgård?

MONSEN.

Quite right. [*Introducing them.*] Mr. Stensgård, Mr. Daniel Heire——

BASTIAN.

Capitalist.

HEIRE.

Ex-capitalist, you should rather say. It's all gone now; slipped through my fingers, so to speak. Not that I'm bankrupt—for goodness' sake don't think that.

MONSEN.

HEIRE.

Hee-hee; you needn't look so uncomfortable, man. You don't suppose I'm alluding to Mr. Monsen. No one can accuse Mr. Monsen of being aristocratic. No; it's Chamberlain Bratsberg, my dear young friend.

STENSGÅRD.

What! In money matters the Chamberlain is surely above reproach.

HEIRE.

You think so, young man? H'm; I say no more. [*Draws nearer.*] Twenty years ago I was worth no end of money. My father left me a great fortune. You've heard of my father, I daresay? No? Old Hans Heire? They called him Gold Hans. He was a shipowner: made heaps of money in the blockade time; had his window-frames and door-posts gilded; he could afford it—— I say no more; so they called him Gold Hans.

ASLAKSEN.

Didn't he gild his chimney-pots too?

HEIRE.

No; that was only a penny-a-liner's lie; invented long before your time, however. But he made the money fly; and so did I in my time. My visit to London, for instance—haven't you heard of my visit to London? I took a prince's retinue with me. Have you really not heard of it, eh? And the sums I have lavished on art and science! And on bringing rising talent to the front!

ASLAKSEN.

[*Rises.*] Well, good-bye, gentlemen.

MONSEN.

What? Are you leaving us?

ASLAKSEN.

Yes; I want to stretch my legs a bit. [*Goes.*

HEIRE.

[*Speaking low.*] He was one of them—just as grateful as the rest, hee-hee! Do you know, I kept him a whole year at college?

STENSGÅRD.

Indeed? Has Aslaksen been to college?

HEIRE.

Like young Monsen. He made nothing of it; also like—— I say no more. Had to give him up, you see; he had already developed his unhappy taste for spirits——

MONSEN.

But you've forgotten what you were going to tell Mr. Stensgård about the Chamberlain.

HEIRE.

Oh, it's a complicated business. When my father was in his glory, things were going downhill with the old Chamberlain—this one's father, you understand; he was a Chamberlain too.

BASTIAN.

Of course; everything runs in families here.

HEIRE.

Including the social graces—— I say no more. The conversion of the currency, rash speculations, extravagances he launched out into, in the year 1816 or thereabouts, forced him to sell some of his land.

STENSGÅRD.

And your father bought it?

HEIRE.

Bought and paid for it. Well, what then? I come into my property; I make improvements by the thousand——

BASTIAN.

Of course.

HEIRE.

Your health, my young friend!—Improvements by the thousand, I say—thinning the woods, and so forth. Years pass; and then comes Master Reynard—the present one, I mean—and repudiates the bargain!

STENSGÅRD.

But, my dear Mr. Heire, you could surely have snapped your fingers at him.

HEIRE.

Not so easily! Some small formalities had been overlooked, he declared. Besides, I happened then to be

in temporary difficulties, which afterwards became permanent. And what can a man do nowadays without capital?

MONSEN.

You're right there, by God! And in many ways you can't do very much w i t h capital either. That I know to my cost. Why, even my innocent children——

BASTIAN.

[*Thumps the table.*] Ugh, father! if I only had certain people here!

STENSGÅRD.

Your children, you say?

MONSEN.

Yes; take Bastian, for example. Perhaps I haven't given him a good education?

HEIRE.

A threefold education! First for the University; then for painting; and then for—what is it?—it's a civil engineer he is now, isn't it?

BASTIAN.

Yes, that I am, by the Lord!

MONSEN.

Yes, that he is; I can produce his bills and his certificates to prove it! But who gets the town business?

Who has got the local road-making—especially these last two years? Foreigners, or at any rate strangers—in short, people no one knows anything about!

HEIRE.

Yes; it's shameful the way things go on. Only last New Year, when the managership of the Savings Bank fell vacant, what must they do but give Monsen the go-by, and choose an individual that knew—[*Coughs*]—that knew how to keep his purse-strings drawn—which our princely host obviously does not. Whenever there's a post of confidence going, it's always the same! Never Monsen—always some one that enjoys the confidence—of the people in power. Well, well; *commune suffragium*, as the Roman Law puts it; that means shipwreck in the Common Council, sir.[1] It's a shame! Your health!

MONSEN.

Thanks! But, to change the subject—how are all your law-suits getting on?

HEIRE.

They are still pending; I can say no more for the present. What endless annoyance they do give me! Next week I shall have to summon the whole Town Council before the Arbitration Commission.[2]

[1] In this untranslatable passage Daniel Heire seems to be making a sort of pun on *suffragium* and *naufragium*.

[2] In Norway, before an action comes into Court, the parties are bound to appear in person before a Commission of Arbitration or Conciliation. If the Commission can suggest an arrangement acceptable to both sides, this arrangement has the validity of a judgment, and the case goes no further. Counsel are not allowed to appear before the Commission.

BASTIAN.

Is it true that you once summoned yourself before the Arbitration Commission?

HEIRE.

Myself? Yes; but I didn't put in an appearance.

MONSEN.

Ha, ha! You didn't, eh?

HEIRE.

I had a sufficient excuse: had to cross the river, and it was unfortunately the very year of Bastian's bridge—plump! down it went, you know——

BASTIAN.

Why, confound it all——!

HEIRE.

Take it coolly, young man! You are not the first that has bent the bow till it breaks. Everything runs in families, you know—— I say no more.

MONSEN.

Ho ho ho! You say no more, eh? Well, drink, then, and say no more! [*To* STENSGÅRD.] You see, Mr. Heire's tongue is licensed to wag as it pleases.

HEIRE.

Yes, freedom of speech is the only civic right I really value.

STENSGÅRD.

What a pity the law should restrict it.

HEIRE.

Hee-hee! Our legal friend's mouth is watering for a nice action for slander, eh? Make your mind easy, my dear sir! I'm an old hand, let me tell you!

STENSGÅRD.

Especially at slander?

HEIRE.

Your pardon, young man! That outburst of indignation does honour to your heart. I beg you to forget an old man's untimely frankness about your absent friends.

STENSGÅRD.

Absent friends?

HEIRE.

I have nothing to say against the son, of course—nor against the daughter. And if I happened to cast a passing slur upon the Chamberlain's character——

STENSGÅRD.

The Chamberlain's? Is it the Chamberlain's family you call my friends?

HEIRE.

Well, you don't pay visits to your enemies, I presume?

BASTIAN.

Visits?

MONSEN.

What?

HEIRE.

Ow, ow, ow! Here am I letting cats out of bags——!

MONSEN.

Have you been paying visits at the Chamberlain's?

STENSGÅRD.

Nonsense! A misunderstanding——

HEIRE.

A most unhappy slip on my part. But how was I to know it was a secret? [*To* MONSEN.] Besides, you mustn't take my expressions too literally. When I say a visit, I mean only a sort of formal call; a frock-coat and yellow gloves affair——

STENSGÅRD.

I tell you I haven't exchanged a single word with any of that family!

HEIRE.

Is it possible? Were you not received the second time either? I know they were "not at home" the first time.

STENSGÅRD.

[*To* MONSEN.] I had a letter to deliver from a friend in Christiania—that was all.

HEIRE.

[*Rising.*] I'll be hanged if it isn't positively revolting! Here is a young man at the outset of his career; full of simple-minded confidence, he seeks out the experienced man-of-the-world and knocks at his door; turns to him, who has brought his ship to port, to beg for—— I say no more! The man-of-the-world shuts the door in his face; is not at home; never i s at home, when it's his duty to be—— I say no more! [*With indignation.*] Was there ever such shameful insolence!

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, never mind that stupid business.

HEIRE.

Not at home! He, who goes about professing that he is always at home to reputable people!

STENSGÅRD.

Does he say that?

HEIRE.

A mere empty phrase. He's not at home to Mr. Monsen either. But I can't think what has made him hate you so much. Yes, hate you, I say; for what do you think I heard yesterday?

STENSGÅRD.

I don't want to know what you heard yesterday.

HEIRE.

Then I say no more. Besides, the expressions didn't surprise me—coming from the Chamberlain, I mean. Only I can't understand why he should have added "demagogue."

STENSGÅRD.

Demagogue!

HEIRE.

Well, since you insist upon it, I must confess that the Chamberlain called you an adventurer and demagogue.

STENSGÅRD.

[*Jumps up.*] What!

HEIRE.

Adventurer and demagogue—or demagogue and adventurer; I won't answer for the order.

STENSGÅRD.

And you heard that?

HEIRE.

I? If I had been present, Mr. Stensgård, you may be sure I should have stood up for you as you deserve.

MONSEN.

There, you see what comes of——

STENSGÅRD.

How dare the old scoundrel——?

HEIRE.

Come, come, come! Keep your temper. Very likely it was a mere figure of speech—a harmless little joke, I have no doubt. You can demand an explanation to-morrow; for I suppose you are going to the great dinner-party, eh?

STENSGÅRD.

I am not going to any dinner-party.

HEIRE.

Two calls and no invitation——!

STENSGÅRD.

Demagogue and adventurer! What can he be thinking of?

MONSEN.

Look there! Talk of the devil——! Come, Bastian.
[*Goes off with* BASTIAN.

STENSGÅRD.

What did he mean by it, Mr. Heire?

HEIRE.

Haven't the ghost of an idea.—It pains you? Your hand, young man! Pardon me if my frankness has wounded you. Believe me, you have yet many bitter lessons to learn in this life. You are young; you are confiding; you are trustful. It is beautiful; it is even touching; but—but—trustfulness is silver, experience is

gold: that's a proverb of my own invention, sir! God bless you! [*Goes.*

CHAMBERLAIN BRATSBERG, *his daughter* THORA, *and* DOCTOR FIELDBO *enter from the left.*

LUNDESTAD.

[*Strikes the bell on the rostrum.*] Silence for Mr. Ringdal's speech!

STENSGÅRD.

[*Shouts.*] Mr. Lundestad, I demand to be heard.

LUNDESTAD.

Afterwards.

STENSGÅRD.

No, now! at once!

LUNDESTAD.

You can't speak just now. Silence for Mr. Ringdal!

RINGDAL.

[*On the rostrum.*] Ladies and gentlemen! We have at this moment the honour of seeing in our midst the man with the warm heart and the open hand—the man we have all looked up to for many a year, as to a father—the man who is always ready to help us, both in word and deed—the man whose door is never closed to any reputable citizen—the man who—who—ladies and gentlemen, our honoured guest is no lover of long speeches; so, without more words, I call for three cheers for Chamberlain Bratsberg and his family! Long life to them! Hurrah!

THE CROWD.

Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!

[Great enthusiasm; people press around the CHAMBERLAIN, *who thanks them and shakes hands with those nearest him.*

STENSGÅRD.

Now may I speak?

LUNDESTAD.

By all means. The platform is at your service.

STENSGÅRD.

[Jumps upon the table.] I shall choose my own platform!

THE YOUNG MEN.

[Crowding around him.] Hurrah!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[To the DOCTOR.] Who is this obstreperous personage?

FIELDBO.

Mr. Stensgård.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, it's he, is it?

STENSGÅRD.

Listen to me, my glad-hearted brothers and sisters! Hear me, all you who have in your souls—though it may not reach your lips—the exultant song of the day, the day of our freedom! I am a stranger among you——

ASLAKSEN.

No!

STENSGÅRD.

Thanks for that "No!" I take it as the utterance of a longing, an aspiration. A stranger I am, however; but this I swear, that I come among you with a great and open-hearted sympathy for your sorrows and your joys, your victories and defeats. If it lay in my power——

ASLAKSEN.

It does, it does!

LUNDESTAD.

No interruptions! You have no right to speak.

STENSGÅRD.

You still less! I abolish the Committee! Freedom on the day of freedom, boys!

THE YOUNG MEN.

Hurrah for freedom!

STENSGÅRD.

They deny you the right of speech! You hear it—they want to gag you! Away with this tyranny! I won't stand here declaiming to a flock of dumb animals. I will talk; but you shall talk too. We will talk to each other, from the heart!

THE CROWD.

[*With growing enthusiasm.*] Hurrah!

STENSGÅRD.

We will have no more of these barren, white-chokered festivities! A golden harvest of deeds shall hereafter shoot up from each Seventeenth of May. May! Is it not the season of bud and blossom, the blushing maiden-month of the year? On the first of June I shall have been just two months among you; and in that time what greatness and littleness, what beauty and deformity, have I not seen?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What on earth is he talking about, Doctor?

FIELDBO.

Aslaksen says it's the local situation.

STENSGÅRD.

I have seen great and brilliant possibilities among the masses; but I have seen, too, a spirit of corruption brooding over the germs of promise and bringing them to nought. I have seen ardent and trustful youth rush yearning forth—and I have seen the door shut in its face.

THORA.

Oh, Heaven!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What does he mean by that?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, my brothers and sisters in rejoicing! There hovers in the air an Influence, a Spectre from the dead and

rotten past, which spreads darkness and oppression where there should be nothing but buoyancy and light. We must lay that Spectre; down with it!

THE CROWD.

Hurrah! Hurrah for the Seventeenth of May!

THORA.

Come away, father——!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What the deuce does he mean by a spectre? Who is he talking about, Doctor?

FIELDBO.

[*Quickly.*] Oh, it's about——

[*Whispers a word or two.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Aha! So that's it!

THORA.

[*Softly to* FIELDBO.] Thanks!

STENSGÅRD.

If no one else will crush the dragon, I will! But we must hold together, boys!

MANY VOICES.

Yes! yes!

STENSGÅRD.

We are young! The time belongs to us; but we also belong to the time. Our right is our duty! Elbow-room for faculty, for will, for power! Listen to me! We must form a League. The money-bag has ceased to rule among us!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Bravo! [*To the* DOCTOR.] He said the money-bag; so no doubt you're right——

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, boys; we, we are the wealth of the country, if only there's metal in us. Our will is the ringing gold that shall pass from man to man. War to the knife against whoever shall deny its currency!

THE CROWD.

Hurrah!

STENSGÅRD.

A scornful "bravo" has been flung in my teeth——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

No, no!

STENSGÅRD.

What care I! Thanks and threats alike are powerless over the perfect will. And now, God be with us! For we are going about His work, with youth and faith to help us. Come, then, into the refreshment-tent—our League shall be baptized this very hour.

THE CROWD.

Hurrah! Carry him! Shoulder high with him!

[He is lifted shoulder high.

VOICES.

Speak on! More! More!

STENSGÅRD.

Let us hold together, I say! Providence is on the side of the League of Youth. It lies with us to rule the world—here in the district!

[He is carried into the tent amid wild enthusiasm.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

[Wiping her eyes.] Oh, Lord, how beautifully he does speak! Don't you feel as if you could kiss him, Mr. Heire?

HEIRE.

Thank you, I'd rather not.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Oh, you! I daresay not.

HEIRE.

Perhaps you would like to kiss him, Madam Rundholmen.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Ugh, how horrid you are!

[She goes into the tent; HEIRE *follows her.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Spectre—and dragon—and money-bag! It was horribly rude—but well deserved!

LUNDESTAD.

[*Approaching.*] I'm heartily sorry, Chamberlain——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, where was your knowledge of character, Lundestad? Well, well; we are none of us infallible. Good-night, and thanks for a pleasant evening. [*Turns to* THORA *and the* DOCTOR.] But bless me, I've been positively rude to that fine young fellow!

FIELDBO.

How so?

THORA.

His call, you mean——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

He called twice. It's really Lundestad's fault. He told me he was an adventurer and—and I forget what else. Fortunately I can make up for it.

THORA.

How?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Come, Thora; let us see to it at once——

FIELDBO.

Oh, do you think it's worth while, Chamberlain——?

THORA.

[*Softly.*] Hush!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

When one has done an injustice one should lose no time in undoing it; that's a plain matter of duty. Good-night, Doctor. After all, I've spent an amusing hour; and that's more than I have to thank y o u for to-day.

FIELDBO.

Me, Chamberlain?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, yes, yes—you and others.

FIELDBO.

May I ask what I——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Don't be curious, Doctor. I am never curious. Come, come—no offence—good-night!

[THE CHAMBERLAIN *and* THORA *go out to the left;* FIELDBO *gazes thoughtfully after them.*

ASLAKSEN.

[*From the tent.*] Hei, waiter! Pen and ink! Things are getting lively, Doctor!

FIELDBO.

What things?

ASLAKSEN.

He's founding the League. It's nearly founded.

LUNDESTAD.

[*Who has quietly drawn near.*] Are many putting down their names?

ASLAKSEN.

We've enrolled about seven-and-thirty, not counting widows and so forth. Pen and ink, I say! No waiters to be found!—that's the fault of the local situation.

[*Goes off behind the tent.*

LUNDESTAD.

Puh! It has been hot to-day.

FIELDBO.

I'm afraid we have hotter days to come.

LUNDESTAD.

Do you think the Chamberlain was very angry?

FIELDBO.

Oh, not in the least; you could see that, couldn't you? But what do you say to the new League?

LUNDESTAD.

H'm; I say nothing. What is there to be said?

FIELDBO.

It's the beginning of a struggle for power here in the district.

LUNDESTAD.

Well, well; no harm in a fight. He has great gifts, that Stensgård.

FIELDBO.

He is determined to make his way.

LUNDESTAD.

Youth is always determined to make its way. I was, when I was young; no one can object to that. But mightn't we look in and see——

HEIRE.

[*From the tent.*] Well, Mr. Lundestad, are you going to move the previous question, eh? To head the opposition? Hee-hee! You must make haste!

LUNDESTAD.

Oh, I daresay I shall be in time.

HEIRE.

Too late, sir! Unless you want to stand godfather. [*Cheering from the tent.*] There, they're chanting Amen: the baptism is over.

LUNDESTAD.

I suppose one may be permitted to listen; I shall keep quiet. [*Enters the tent.*

HEIRE

There goes one of the falling trees! There will be a rare uprooting, I can tell you! The place will soon look like a wood after a tornado. Won't I chuckle over it!

FIELDBO.

Tell me, Mr. Heire, what interest have you in the matter?

HEIRE

Interest? I am entirely disinterested, Doctor! If I chuckle, it is on behalf of my fellow citizens. There will be life, spirit, go, in things. For my own part—good Lord, it's all the same to me; I say, as the Grand Turk said of the Emperor of Austria and the King of France —I don't care whether the pig eats the dog or the dog the pig. [*Goes out towards the back on the right.*

THE CROWD.

[*In the tent.*] Long live Stensgård! Hurrah! Hurrah for the League of Youth! Wine! Punch! Hei, hei! Beer! Hurrah!

BASTIAN.

[*Comes from the tent.*] God bless you and every one! [*With tears in his voice.*] Oh, Doctor, I feel so strong this evening; I must do something.

FIELDBO.

Don't mind me. What would you like to do?

BASTIAN.

I think I'll go down to the dancing-room and fight one or two fellows. [*Goes out behind the tent.*

STENSGÅRD.

[*Comes from the tent without his hat, and greatly excited.*] My dear Fieldbo, is that you?

FIELDBO.

At your service, Tribune of the People! For I suppose you've been elected——?

STENSGÅRD.

Of course; but——

FIELDBO.

And what is to come of it all? What nice little post are you to have? The management of the Bank? Or perhaps——

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, don't talk to me like that! I know you don't mean it. You are not so empty and wooden as you like to appear.

FIELDBO.

Empty and wooden, eh?

STENSGÅRD.

Fieldbo! Be my friend as you used to be! We have not understood each other of late. You have wounded and repelled me with your ridicule and irony. Believe me, it was wrong of you. [*Embraces him.*] Oh, my great God! how happy I am!

FIELDBO.

You too? So am I, so am I!

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, I should be the meanest hound on earth if all heaven's bounty didn't make me good and true. How

have I deserved it, Fieldbo? What have I, sinner that I am, done to be so richly blessed?

FIELDBO.

There is my hand! This evening I am your friend indeed!

STENSGÅRD.

Thanks! Be faithful and true, as I shall be!—Oh, isn't it an unspeakable joy to carry all that multitude away and along with you? How can you help becoming good from mere thankfulness? And how it makes you love all your fellow creatures! I feel as if I could clasp them all in one embrace, and weep, and beg their forgiveness because God has been so partial as to give me more than them.

FIELDBO.

[*Quietly.*] Yes, treasures without price may fall to one man's lot. This evening I would not crush an insect, not a green leaf upon my path.

STENSGÅRD.

You?

FIELDBO.

Never mind. That's apart from the question. I only mean that I understand you.

STENSGÅRD.

What a lovely night! Listen to the music and merriment floating out over the meadows. And how still it is

in the valley! I tell you the man whose life is not reconsecrated in such an hour, does not deserve to live on God's earth!

FIELDBO.

Yes; but tell me now: what do you mean to build up out of it—to-morrow, and through the working-days to come?

STENSGÅRD.

To build up? We have to tear down first.—Fieldbo, I had once a dream—or did I see it? No; it was a dream, but such a vivid one! I thought the Day of Judgment was come upon the world. I could see the whole curve of the hemisphere. There was no sun, only a livid storm-light. A tempest arose; it came rushing from the west and swept everything before it; first withered leaves, then men; but they kept on their feet all the time, and their garments clung fast to them, so that they seemed to be hurried along sitting. At first they looked like townspeople running after their hats in a wind; but when they came nearer they were emperors and kings; and it was their crowns and orbs they were chasing and catching at, and seemed always on the point of grasping, but never grasped. Oh, there were hundreds and hundreds of them, and none of them understood in the least what was happening; but many bewailed themselves, and asked: "Whence can it come, this terrible storm?" Then there came the answer: "One Voice spoke, and the storm is the echo of that one Voice."

FIELDBO.

When did you dream that?

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, I don't remember when; several years ago.

FIELDBO.

There were probably disturbances somewhere in Europe, and you had been reading the newspapers after a heavy supper.

STENSGÅRD.

The same shiver, the same thrill, that then ran down my back, I felt again to-night. Yes, I will give my whole soul utterance. I will be the Voice——

FIELDBO.

Come, my dear Stensgård, pause and reflect. You will be the Voice, you say. Good! But where will you be the Voice? Here in the parish? Or at most here in the county! And who will echo you and raise the storm? Why, people like Monsen and Aslaksen, and that fat-headed genius, Mr. Bastian. And instead of the flying emperors and kings, we shall see old Lundestad rushing about after his lost seat in Parliament. Then what will it all amount to? Just what you at first saw in your dream—townsfolk in a wind.

STENSGÅRD.

In the beginning, yes. But who knows how far the storm may sweep?

FIELDBO.

Fiddlesticks with you and your storm! And the first thing you go and do, hoodwinked and blinded and gulled

as you are, is to turn your weapons precisely against all that is worthy and capable among us——

STENSGÅRD.

That is not true.

FIELDBO.

It i s true! Monsen and the Stonelee gang got hold of you the moment you came here; and if you don't shake him off it will be your ruin. Chamberlain Bratsberg is a man of honour; that you may rely on. Do you know why the great Monsen hates him? Why, because——

STENSGÅRD.

Not a word more! I won't hear a word against my friends!

FIELDBO.

Look into yourself, Stensgård! Is Mr. Mons Monsen really your friend?

STENSGÅRD.

Mr. Monsen has most kindly opened his doors to me——

FIELDBO.

To people of the better sort he opens his doors in vain.

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, whom do you call the better sort? A few stuck-up officials! I know all about it. As for me, I have been received at Stonelee with so much cordiality and appreciation——

FIELDBO.

Appreciation? Yes, unfortunately—there we are at the root of the matter.

STENSGÅRD.

Not at all! I can see with unprejudiced eyes. Mr. Monsen has abilities, he has reading, he has a keen sense for public affairs.

FIELDBO.

Abilities? Oh, yes, in a way. Reading too: he takes in the papers, and has read your speeches and articles. And his sense for public affairs he has of course proved by applauding the said articles and speeches.

STENSGÅRD.

Now, Fieldbo, up come the dregs of your nature again. Can you never shake off that polluting habit of thought? Why must you always assume mean or ridiculous motives for everything? Oh, you are not serious! Now you look good and true again. I'll tell you the real root of the matter. Do you know Ragna?

FIELDBO.

Ragna Monsen? Oh, after a fashion—at second hand.

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, I know she is sometimes at the Chamberlain's.

FIELDBO.

In a quiet way, yes. She and Miss Bratsberg are old schoolfellows.

STENSGÅRD.

And what do you think of her?

FIELDBO.

Why, from all I have heard she seems to be a very good girl.

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, you should see her in her home! She thinks of nothing but her two little sisters. And how devotedly she must have nursed her mother! You know the mother was out of her mind for some years before she died.

FIELDBO.

Yes; I was their doctor at one time. But surely, my dear fellow, you don't mean that——

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, Fieldbo, I love her truly; to you I can confess it. Oh, I know what you are surprised at. You think it strange that so soon after—of course you know that I was engaged in Christiania?

FIELDBO.

Yes, so I was told.

STENSGÅRD.

The whole thing was a disappointment. I had to break it off; it was best for all parties. Oh, how I suffered in that affair! The torture, the sense of oppression I endured——! Now, thank heaven, I am out of it all. That was my reason for leaving town.

FIELDBO.

And with regard to Ragna Monsen, are you quite sure of yourself?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, I am indeed. There's no mistake possible in this case.

FIELDBO.

Well, then, in heaven's name, go in and win! It means your life's happiness! Oh, there's so much I could say to you——

STENSGÅRD.

Really? Has she said anything? Has she confided in Miss Bratsberg?

FIELDBO.

No; that's not what I mean. But how can you, in the midst of your happiness, go and fuddle yourself in these political orgies? How can town tattle take any hold upon a mind that is——

STENSGÅRD.

Why not? Man is a complex machine—I am, at any rate. Besides, my way to her lies through these very party turmoils.

FIELDBO.

A terribly prosaic way.

STENSGÅRD.

Fieldbo, I am ambitious; you know I am. I must make my way in the world. When I remember that I'm

thirty, and am still on the first round of the ladder, I feel my conscience gnawing at me.

FIELDBO.

Not with its wisdom teeth.

STENSGÅRD.

It's of no use talking to you. You have never felt the spur of ambition. You have dawdled and drifted all your days—first at college, then abroad, now here.

FIELDBO.

Perhaps; but at least it has been delightful. And no reaction follows, like what you feel when you get down from the table after——

STENSGÅRD.

Stop that! I can bear anything but that. You are doing a bad action—you are damping my ardour.

FIELDBO.

Oh, come! If your ardour is so easily damped——

STENSGÅRD.

Stop, I say! What right have you to break in upon my happiness? Do you think I am not sincere?

FIELDBO.

Yes, I am sure you are.

STENSGÅRD.

Well, then, why go and make me feel empty, and disgusted, and suspicious of myself? [*Shouts and cheers from the tent.*] There—listen! They are drinking my health. An idea that can take such hold upon people—by God, it m u s t have truth in it!

THORA BRATSBERG, RAGNA MONSEN, *and* MR. HELLE *enter from the left and cross, half-way back.*

HELLE.

Look, Miss Bratsberg; there is Mr. Stensgård.

THORA.

Then I won't go any further. Good-night, Ragna dear.

HELLE AND MISS MONSEN.

Good-night, good-night. [*They go out to the right.*

THORA.

[*Advancing.*] I am Miss Bratsberg. I have a letter for you, from my father.

STENSGÅRD.

For me?

THORA.

Yes; here it is. [*Going.*

FIELDBO.

May I not see you home?

THORA.

No, thank you. I can go alone. Good-night.
[*Goes out to the left.*

STENSGÅRD.

[*Reading the letter by a Chinese lantern.*] What is this!

FIELDBO.

Well—what has the Chamberlain to say to you?

STENSGÅRD.

[*Bursts into loud laughter.*] I must say I didn't expect this!

FIELDBO.

Tell me——?

STENSGÅRD.

Chamberlain Bratsberg is a pitiful creature.

FIELDBO.

You dare to——

STENSGÅRD.

Pitiful! Pitiful! Tell any one you please that I said so. Or rather, say nothing about it—— [*Puts the letter in his pocket.*] Don't mention this to any one!
[*The* COMPANY *come out from the tent.*

MONSEN.

Mr. President! Where is Mr. Stensgård?

THE CROWD.

There he is! Hurrah!

LUNDESTAD.

Mr. President has forgotten his hat.

[*Hands it to him.*

ASLAKSEN.

Here; have some punch! Here's a whole bowlful!

STENSGÅRD.

Thanks, no more.

MONSEN.

And the members of the League will recollect that we meet to-morrow at Stonelee——

STENSGÅRD.

To-morrow? It wasn't to-morrow, was it——?

MONSEN.

Yes, certainly; to draw up the manifesto——

STENSGÅRD.

No, I really can't to-morrow—I shall see about it the day after to-morrow, or the day after that. Well, good-night, gentlemen; hearty thanks all round, and hurrah for the future!

THE CROWD.

Hurrah! Let's take him home in triumph!

STENSGÅRD.

Thanks, thanks! But you really mustn't——

ASLAKSEN.

We'll all go with you.

STENSGÅRD.

Very well, come along. Good-night, Fieldbo; you're not coming with us?

FIELDBO.

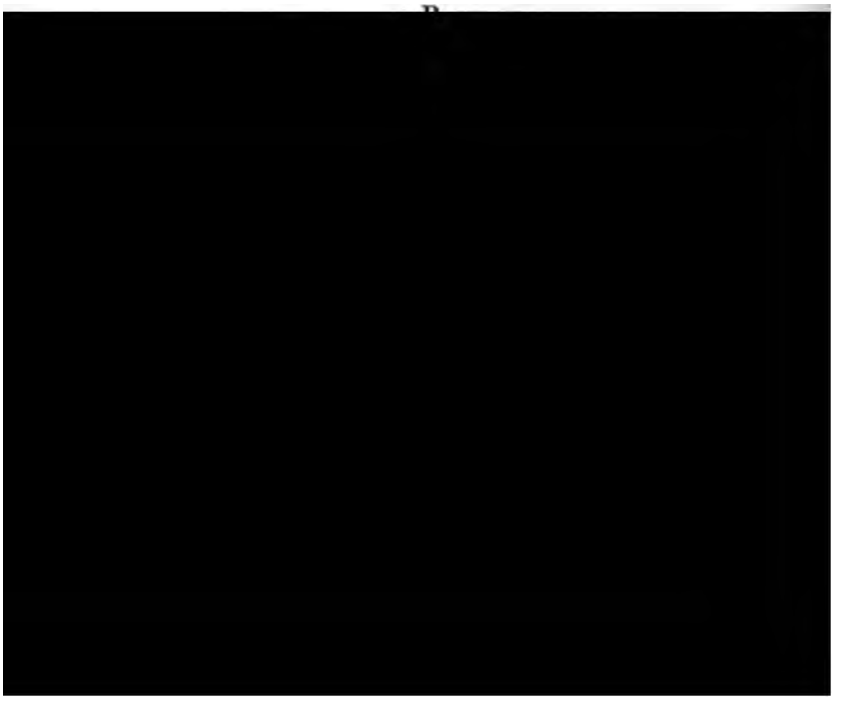
No; but let me tell you, what you said about Chamberlain Bratsberg——

STENSGÅRD.

Hush, hush! It was an exaggeration—I withdraw it! Well, my friends, if you're coming, come; I'll take the lead.

MONSEN.

Your arm, Stensgård!



FIELDBO.

And where are you going, Mr. Lundestad?

LUNDESTAD.

I? I'm going home to bed.

[*He nods and goes off.* DOCTOR FIELDBO *remains behind alone.*

ACT SECOND

A garden-room at the Chamberlain's, elegantly furnished, with a piano, flowers, and rare plants. Entrance door at the back. On the left, a door leading to the dining-room; on the right, several glass doors lead out to the garden.

ASLAKSEN *stands at the entrance door.* A MAID-SERVANT *is carrying some dishes of fruit into the dining-room.*

THE MAID.

Yes, but I tell you they're still at table; you must call again.

ASLAKSEN.

I'd rather wait, if I may.

THE MAID.

Oh yes, if you like. You can sit there for the present.

[*She goes into the dining-room.* ASLAKSEN *takes a seat near the door. Pause.* DR. FIELDBO *enters from the back.*

FIELDBO.

Ah, good evening, Aslaksen: are you here?

THE MAID.

[*Returning.*] You're late this evening, sir.

FIELDBO.

I was called to see a patient.

THE MAID.

The Chamberlain and Miss Bratsberg have both been inquiring about you.

FIELDBO.

Indeed?

THE MAID.

Yes. Won't you go in at once, sir; or shall I say that——?

FIELDBO.

No, no; never mind. I can have a snack afterwards; I shall wait here in the meantime.

THE MAID.

Dinner will soon be over. [*She goes out by the back.*

ASLAKSEN.

[*After a pause.*] How can you resist such a dinner, Doctor—with dessert, and fine wines, and all sorts of good things?

FIELDBO.

Why, man, it seems to me we get too many good things hereabouts, rather than too few.

ASLAKSEN.

There I can't agree with you.

FIELDBO.

H'm. I suppose you are waiting for some one.

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, I am.

FIELDBO.

And are things going tolerably at home? Your wife——?

ASLAKSEN.

In bed, as usual; coughing and wasting away.

FIELDBO.

And your second child?

ASLAKSEN.

Oh, he's a cripple for the rest of his days; you know that. That's our luck, you see; what the devil's the use of talking about it?

FIELDBO.

Let me look at you, Aslaksen!

ASLAKSEN.

Well; what do you want to see?

FIELDBO.

You've been drinking to-day.

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, and yesterday too.

FIELDBO.

Well, yesterday there was some excuse for it; but to-day——

ASLAKSEN.

What about your friends in there, then? Aren't they drinking too?

FIELDBO.

Yes, my dear Aslaksen; that's a fair retort; but circumstances differ so in this world.

ASLAKSEN.

I didn't choose my circumstances.

FIELDBO.

No; God chose them for you.

ASLAKSEN.

No, he didn't—men chose them. Daniel Heire chose, when he took me from the printing-house and sent me to college. And Chamberlain Bratsberg chose, when he ruined Daniel Heire and sent me back to the printing-house.

FIELDBO.

Now you know that's not true. The Chamberlain did not ruin Daniel Heire; Daniel Heire ruined himself.

ASLAKSEN.

Perhaps! But how dared Daniel Heire ruin himself, in the face of his responsibilities towards me? God's

partly to blame too, of course. Why should he give me talent and ability? Well, of course I could have turned them to account as a respectable handicraftsman; but then comes that tattling old fool——

FIELDBO.

It's base of you to say that. Daniel Heire acted with the best intentions.

ASLAKSEN.

What good do his "best intentions" do me? You hear them in there, clinking glasses and drinking healths? Well, I too have sat at that table in my day, dressed in purple and fine linen, like the best of them——! That was just the thing for me, that was—for me, that had read so much and had thirsted so long to have my share in all the good things of life. Well, well; how long was Jeppe in Paradise?[1] Smash, crash! down you go—and

FIELDBO.

Well, far be it from me to judge you harshly——

ASLAKSEN.

No; you have no right to.—What a queer jumble it is! Daniel Heire, and Providence, and the Chamberlain, and Destiny, and Circumstance—and I myself in the middle of it! I've often thought of unravelling it all and writing a book about it; but it's so cursedly entangled that—— [*Glances towards the door on the left.*] Ah! They're rising from table.

[*The party, ladies and gentlemen, pass from the dining-room into the garden, in lively conversation. Among the guests is* STENSGÅRD, *with* THORA *on his left arm and* SELMA *on his right.* FIELDBO *and* ASLAKSEN *stand beside the door at the back.*

STENSGÅRD.

I don't know my way here yet; you must tell me where I am to take you, ladies.

SELMA.

Out into the air; you must see the garden.

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, that will be delightful.

[*They go out by the foremost glass door on the right.*

FIELDBO.

Why, by all that's wonderful, there's Stensgård!

ASLAKSEN.

It's him I want to speak to. I've had a fine c after him; fortunately I met Daniel Heire——

DANIEL HEIRE *and* ERIK BRATSBERG *enter from the dining-room.*

HEIRE.

Hee-hee! Excellent sherry, upon my word. tasted nothing like it since I was in London.

ERIK.

Yes, it's good, isn't it? It puts life into you.

HEIRE.

Well, well—it's a real pleasure to see one's mone well spent.

ERIK.

How so? [*Laughing.*] Oh, yes; I see, I see.
[*They go into the gar*

FIELDBO.

You want to speak to Stensgård, you say?

ASLAKSEN.

Yes.

FIELDBO.

On business?

ASLAKSEN.

Of course; the report of the fête——

FIELDBO.

Well, then, you must wait out there in the meantime.

ASLAKSEN.

In the passage?

FIELDBO.

In the anteroom. This is scarcely the time or place —but the moment I see Stensgård alone, I'll tell him——

ASLAKSEN.

Very well; I'll bide my time. [*Goes out by the back.*

CHAMBERLAIN BRATSBERG, LUNDESTAD, RINGDAL, *and one or two other gentlemen come out of the dining-room.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Conversing with* LUNDESTAD.] Violent, you say? Well, perhaps the form wasn't all that could be desired; but there were real gems in the speech, I can assure you.

LUNDESTAD.

Well, if you are satisfied, Chamberlain, I have no right to complain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Why should you? Ah, here's the Doctor! Starving, I'll be bound.

FIELDBO.

It doesn't matter, Chamberlain. The servants will attend to me. I feel myself almost at home here, you know.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, you do, do you? I wouldn't be in too great a hurry.

FIELDBO.

What? Am I taking too great a liberty? You yourself permitted me to——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What I permitted, I permitted. Well, well, make yourself at home, and forage for something to eat. [*Slaps him lightly on the shoulder and turns to* LUNDESTAD.] Now, here's one you may call an adventurer and—and the other thing I can't remember.

FIELDBO.

Why, Chamberlain——!

LUNDESTAD.

No, I assure you——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

No arguments after dinner; it's bad for the digestion. They'll serve the coffee outside presently.

[*Goes with the guests into the garden.*

LUNDESTAD.

[*To* FIELDBO.] Did you ever see the Chamberlain so strange as he is to-day?

FIELDBO.

I noticed it yesterday evening.

LUNDESTAD.

He will have it that I called Mr. Stensgård an adventurer and something else of that sort.

FIELDBO.

Oh, well, Mr. Lundestad, what if you did? Excuse me; I must go and talk to the ladies.

[*Goes out to the right.*

LUNDESTAD.

[*To* RINGDAL, *who is arranging a card table.*] How do you account for Mr. Stensgård's appearance here to-day?

RINGDAL.

Yes, how? He wasn't on the original list.

LUNDESTAD.

An afterthought, then? After his attack on the Chamberlain yesterday——?

RINGDAL.

Yes, can you understand it?

LUNDESTAD.

Understand it? Oh yes, I suppose I can.

RINGDAL.

[*More softly.*] You think the Chamberlain is afraid of him?

LUNDESTAD.

I think he is prudent—that's what I think.

[*They go up to the back conversing, and so out into the garden. At the same time* SELMA *and* STENSGÅRD *enter by the foremost door on the right.*

SELMA.

Yes, just look—over the tops of the trees you can see the church tower and all the upper part of the town.

STENSGÅRD.

So you can; I shouldn't have thought so.

SELMA.

Don't you think it's a beautiful view?

STENSGÅRD.

Everything is beautiful here: the garden, and the view, and the sunshine, and the people! Great heaven, how beautiful it all is! And you live here all the summer?

SELMA.

No, not my husband and I; we come and go. We have a big, showy house in town, much finer than this; you'll see it soon.

STENSGÅRD.

Perhaps your family live in town?

SELMA.

My family? Who are my family?

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, I didn't know——

SELMA.

We fairy princesses have no family.

STENSGÅRD.

Fairy princesses?

SELMA.

At most we have a wicked stepmother——

STENSGÅRD.

A witch, yes! So you are a princess!

SELMA.

Princess of all the sunken palaces, whence you hear the soft music on midsummer nights. Doctor Fieldbo thinks it must be pleasant to be a princess; but I must tell you——

ERIK BRATSBERG.

[*Coming from the garden.*] Ah, at last I find the little lady!

SELMA.

The little lady is telling Mr. Stensgård the story of her life.

ERIK.

Oh, indeed. And what part does the husband play in the little lady's story?

SELMA.

The Prince, of course. [*To* STENSGÅRD.] You know the prince always comes and breaks the spell, and then all ends happily, and every one calls and congratulates, and the fairy-tale is over.

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, it's too short.

SELMA.

Perhaps—in a way.

ERIK.

[*Putting his arm round her waist.*] But a new fairy-tale grows out of the old one, and in it the Princess becomes a Queen!

SELMA.

On the same condition as real Princesses?

ERIK.

What condition?

SELMA.

They must go into exile—to a foreign kingdom.

ERIK.

A cigar, Mr. Stensgård?

STENSGÅRD.

Thank you, not just now.

DOCTOR FIELDBO *and* THORA *enter from the garden.*

SELMA.

[*Going towards them.*] Is that you, Thora dear? I hope you're not ill?

THORA.

I? No.

SELMA.

Oh, but I'm sure you must be; you seem to be always consulting the doctor of late.

THORA.

No, I assure you——

SELMA.

Nonsense; let me feel your pulse! You are burning. My dear Doctor, don't you think the fever will pass over?

FIELDBO.

Everything has its time.

THORA.

Would you rather have me freezing——?

SELMA.

No, a medium temperature is the best—ask my husband.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Enters from the garden.*] The whole family gathered in secret conclave? That's not very polite to the guests.

THORA.

I am just going, father dear——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Aha, it is you the ladies are paying court to, Mr. Stensgård! I must look to this.

THORA.

[*Softly to* FIELDBO.] Remain here!

[*She goes into the garden.*

ERIK.

[*Offers* SELMA *his arm.*] Has Madame any objection——?

SELMA.

Come! [*They go out to the right.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Looking after them.*] It's impossible to get these two separated.

FIELDBO.

It would be sinful to try.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Fools that we are! How Providence blesses us in spite of ourselves. [*Calls out.*] Thora, Thora, do look after Selma! Get a shawl for her, and don't let her run about so: she'll catch cold! How short-sighted we mortals are, Doctor! Do you know any cure for that disease?

FIELDBO.

The spectacles of experience; through them you will see more clearly a second time.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

You don't say so! Thanks for the advice. But since you feel yourself at home here, you must really pay a little attention to your guests.

FIELDBO.

Certainly; come, Stensgård, shall we——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, no, no—there's my old friend Heire out there——

FIELDBO.

He thinks himself at home here too.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Ha ha ha! So he does.

FIELDBO.

Well, we two will join forces, and do our best.

[*Goes into the garden.*

STENSGÅRD.

You were speaking of Daniel Heire, Chamberlain. I must say I was rather surprised to see him here.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Were you? Mr. Heire and I are old school and college friends. Besides, we have had a good deal to do with each other in many ways since——

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, Mr. Heire was good enough to give his own account of some of these transactions, yesterday evening.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

H'm!

STENSGÅRD.

Had it not been for him, I certainly should not have let myself boil over as I did. But he has a way of speaking of people and things, that—in short, he has a vile tongue in his head.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

My dear young friend—Mr. Heire is my guest; you must not forget that. My house is liberty hall, with only one reservation: my guests must not be discussed to their disadvantage.

STENSGÅRD.

I beg your pardon, I'm sure——!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, never mind; you belong to the younger generation, that's not so punctilious. As for Mr. Heire, I don't think you really know him. I, at any rate, owe Mr. Heire a great deal.

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, so he gave one to understand; but I didn't think——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I owe him the best part of our domestic happiness, Mr. Stensgård! I owe him my daughter-in-law. Yes, that is really so. Daniel Heire was kind to her in her childhood. She was a youthful prodigy; she gave concerts when she was only ten years old. I daresay you have heard her spoken of—Selma Sjöblom.[1]

STENSGÅRD.

Sjöblom? Yes, of course; her father was Swedish?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, a music-teacher. He came here many years ago. Musicians, you know, are seldom millionaires; and their habits are not always calculated to——; in short, Mr. Heire has always had an eye for talent; he was struck with the child, and had her sent to Berlin; and then, when her father was dead and Heire's fortunes were on the wane, she returned to Christiania, where she was of course taken up by the best people. That was how my son happened to fall in with her.

STENSGÅRD.

Then in that way old Daniel Heire has indeed been an instrument for good——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

That is how one thing leads to another in this life, you see. We are all instruments, Mr. Stensgård; you, like the rest of us; an instrument of wrath, I suppose——

[1] Pronounce "Shöblom"—the modified "ö" much as in German.

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, don't speak of it, Chamberlain. I am utterly ashamed——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Ashamed?

STENSGÅRD.

It was most unbecoming——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

The form was perhaps open to criticism, but the intention was excellent. And now I want to ask you, in future, when you are contemplating any move of the sort, just to come to me and tell me of it openly, and without reserve. You know we all want to act for the best; and it is my duty——

STENSGÅRD.

You will permit me to speak frankly to you?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Of course I will. Do you think I haven't long realised that matters here have in some ways taken a most undesirable turn? But what was I to do? In the late King's time I lived for the most part in Stockholm. I am old now; and besides, it is not in my nature to take the lead in reforms, or to throw myself personally into the turmoil of public affairs. You, on the other hand, Mr. Stensgård, have every qualification for them; so let us hold together.

STENSGÅRD.

Thanks, Chamberlain; many, many thanks!

RINGDAL *and* DANIEL HEIRE *enter from the garden.*

RINGDAL.

And I tell you it must be a misunderstanding.

HEIRE.

Indeed? I like that! How should I misunderstand my own ears?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Anything new, Heire?

HEIRE.

Only that Anders Lundestad is going over to the Stonelee party.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, you're joking!

HEIRE.

I beg your pardon, my dear sir; I have it from his own lips. Mr. Lundestad intends, on account of failing health, to retire from political life; you can draw your own conclusions from that.

STENSGÅRD.

He told you so himself?

HEIRE.

Of course he did. He made the momentous announcement to an awe-struck circle down in the garden; hee-hee!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Why, my dear Ringdal, what can be the meaning of this?

HEIRE.

Oh, it's not difficult to guess.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Indeed it is though. This is a most important affair for the district. Come along, Ringdal; we must find the man himself.

[*He and* RINGDAL *go down the garden.*

FIELDBO.

[*Entering by the furthest back garden-door.*] Has the Chamberlain gone out?

HEIRE.

Sh! The sages are deliberating! Great news, Doctor! Lundestad is going to resign.

FIELDBO.

Oh, impossible!

STENSGÅRD.

Can you understand it?

HEIRE.

Ah, now we may look out for real sport. It's the League of Youth that's beginning to work, Mr. Stensgård. Do you know what you should call your League? I'll tell you some other time.

STENSGÅRD.

Do you think it's really our League——?

HEIRE.

Not the least doubt about it. So we're to have the pleasure of sending our respected friend Mr. Mons Monsen to Parliament! I wish he were off already;—I'd give him a lift with pleasure—— I say no more; hee-hee! [*Goes into the garden.*

STENSGÅRD.

Tell me, Fieldbo—how do you explain all this?

FIELDBO.

There are other things still more difficult to explain. How come y o u to be here?

STENSGÅRD.

I? Like the rest, of course—by invitation.

FIELDBO.

I hear you were invited yesterday evening—after your speech——

STENSGÅRD.

What then?

FIELDBO.

How could you accept the invitation?

STENSGÅRD.

What the deuce was I to do? I couldn't insult these good people.

FIELDBO.

Indeed! You couldn't? What about your speech then?

STENSGÅRD.

Nonsense! It was principles I attacked in my speech, not persons.

FIELDBO.

And how do you account for the Chamberlain's invitation?

STENSGÅRD.

Why, my dear friend, there can only be one way of accounting for it.

FIELDBO.

Namely, that the Chamberlain is afraid of you?

STENSGÅRD.

By heaven, he shall have no reason to be! He is a gentleman.

FIELDBO.

That he is.

STENSGÅRD.

Isn't it touching the way the old man has taken this affair? And how lovely Miss Bratsberg looked when she brought me the letter!

FIELDBO.

But look here—they haven't mentioned the scene of yesterday, have they?

STENSGÅRD.

Not a word; they have far too much tact for that. But I am filled with remorse; I must find an opportunity of apologising——

FIELDBO.

I strongly advise you not to! You don't know the Chamberlain——

STENSGÅRD.

Very well; then my acts shall speak for me.

FIELDBO.

You won't break with the Stonelee party?

STENSGÅRD.

I shall bring about a reconciliation. I have my League; it's a power already, you see.

FIELDBO.

By-the-bye, while I remember—we were speaking of Miss Monsen—I advised you to go in and win——

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, there's no hurry——

FIELDBO.

But listen; I have been thinking it over: you had better put all that out of your head.

STENSGÅRD.

I believe you are right. If you marry into an underbred family, you marry the whole tribe of them.

FIELDBO.

Yes, and there are other reasons——

STENSGÅRD.

Monsen is an underbred fellow; I see that now.

FIELDBO.

Well, polish is not his strong point.

STENSGÅRD.

No, indeed it's not! He goes and speaks ill of his guests; that's ungentlemanly. His rooms all reek of stale tobacco——

FIELDBO.

My dear fellow, how is it you haven't noticed the stale tobacco before?

STENSGÅRD.

It's the contrast that does it. I made a false start when I settled here. I fell into the clutches of a clique, and they bewildered me with their clamour. But there shall be an end to that! I won't go and wear my life out as a tool in the hands of self-interest or coarse stupidity.

FIELDBO.

But what will you do with your League?

STENSGÅRD.

The League shall remain as it is; it's founded on a pretty broad basis. Its purpose is to counteract noxious influences; and I am just beginning to realise what side the noxious influences come from.

FIELDBO.

But do you think the "Youth" will see it in the same light?

STENSGÅRD.

They s h a l l ! I have surely a right to expect fellows like that to bow before my superior insight.

FIELDBO.

But if they won't?

STENSGÅRD.

Then they can go their own way. I have done with them. You don't suppose I am going to let my life slip into a wrong groove, and never reach the goal, for the sake of mere blind, pig-headed consistency!

FIELDBO.

What do you call the goal?

STENSGÅRD.

A career that gives scope for my talents, and fulfils my aspirations.

FIELDBO.

No vague phrases! What do you mean by your goal?

STENSGÅRD.

Well, to you I can make a clean breast of it. My goal is this: in the course of time to get into Parliament, perhaps into the Ministry, and to marry happily into a family of means and position.

FIELDBO.

Oh, indeed! And by help of the Chamberlain's social connections you intend to——?

STENSGÅRD.

I intend to reach the goal by my own exertions! I must and will reach it; and without help from any one. It will take time, I daresay; but never mind! Meanwhile I shall enjoy life here, drinking in beauty and sunshine——

FIELDBO.

Here?

STENSGÅRD

Yes, here! Here there are fine manners; life moves gracefully here; the very floors seem laid to be trodden only by lacquered shoes. Here the arm-chairs are deep and the ladies sink exquisitely into them. Here conversation moves lightly and elegantly, like a game at battledore; here no blunders come plumping in to make an awkward silence. Oh, Fieldbo—here I feel for the first time what distinction means! Yes, we have indeed an aristocracy of our own; a little circle; an aristocracy of culture; and to it I will belong. Don't you yourself feel the refining influence of this place? Don't you feel that wealth here loses its grossness? When I think of Monsen's money, I seem to see piles of fetid bank-notes and greasy mortgages—but here! here it is shimmering silver! And the people are the same. Look at the Chamberlain —what a fine high-bred old fellow!

FIELDBO.

He is indeed.

STENSGÅRD.

And the son—alert, straightforward, capable!

FIELDBO.

Certainly.

STENSGÅRD.

And then the daughter-in-law! Isn't she a pearl? Good God, what a rich, what a fascinating nature!

FIELDBO.

Thora—Miss Bratsberg has that too.

STENSGÅRD.

Oh yes; but she is less remarkable.

FIELDBO.

Oh, you don't know her. You don't know how deep, and steadfast, and true her nature is.

STENSGÅRD.

But oh, the daughter-in-law! So frank, almost reckless; and yet so appreciative, so irresistible——

FIELDBO.

Why, I really believe you're in love with her.

STENSGÅRD.

With a married woman? Are you crazy? What good would t h a t do me? No, but I am falling in love—I can feel that plainly. Yes, she is indeed deep, and steadfast, and true.

FIELDBO.

Who?

STENSGÅRD.

Miss Bratsberg, of course.

FIELDBO.

What? You're never thinking of——?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, by heaven I am!

FIELDBO.

I assure you it's quite out of the question.

STENSGÅRD.

Ho-ho! Will rules the world, my dear fellow! We shall see if it doesn't.

FIELDBO.

Why, this is the merest extravagance! Yesterday it was Miss Monsen——

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, I was too hasty about that; besides, you yourself advised me not to——

FIELDBO.

I advise you most emphatically to dismiss all thought of either of them.

STENSGÅRD.

Indeed! Perhaps you yourself think of throwing the handkerchief to one of them?

FIELDBO.

I? No, I assure you——

STENSGÅRD.

Well, it wouldn't have mattered if you had. If people stand in my way and want to balk me of my future, why, I stick at nothing.

FIELDBO.

Take care I don't say the same!

STENSGÅRD.

You! What right have you to pose as guardian and protector to Chamberlain Bratsberg's family?

FIELDBO.

I have at least the right of a friend.

STENSGÅRD.

Pooh! that sort of talk won't do with me. Your motive is mere self-interest! It gratifies your petty vanity to imagine yourself cock-of-the-walk in this house; and so I am to be kept outside the pale.

FIELDBO.

That is the best thing that could happen to you. Here you are standing on hollow ground.

STENSGÅRD.

Am I indeed? Many thanks! I shall manage to prop it up.

FIELDBO.

Try; but I warn you, it will fall through with you first.

STENSGÅRD.

Ho-ho! So you are intriguing against me, are you? I'm glad I have found it out. I know you now; you are my enemy, the only one I have here.

FIELDBO.

Indeed I am not.

STENSGÅRD.

Indeed you are! You have always been so, ever since our school-days. Just look around here and see how every one appreciates me, stranger as I am. You, on the other hand, you who know me, have never appreciated me. That is the radical weakness of your character—you can never appreciate any one. What did you do in Christiania but go about from tea-party to tea-party, spreading yourself out in little witticisms? That sort of thing brings its own punishment! You dull your sense for all that makes life worth living, for all that is ennobling and inspiring; and presently you get left behind, fit for nothing.

FIELDBO.

Am I fit for nothing?

STENSGÅRD.

Have you ever been fit to appreciate me?

FIELDBO.

W h a t was I to appreciate in you?

STENSGÅRD.

My will, if nothing else. Every one else appreciates it—the crowd at the fête yesterday—Chamberlain Bratsberg and his family——

FIELDBO.

Mr. Mons Monsen and his ditto——! And by-the-bye, that reminds me—there's some one out here waiting for you——

STENSGÅRD.

Who?

FIELDBO.

[*Going towards the back.*] One who appreciates you. [*Opens the door and calls.*] Aslaksen, come in!

STENSGÅRD.

Aslaksen?

ASLAKSEN.

[*Entering.*] Ah, at last!

FIELDBO.

Good-bye for the present; I won't intrude upon friends in council. [*Goes into the garden.*

STENSGÅRD.

What in the devil's name do you want here?

ASLAKSEN.

I m u s t speak to you. You promised me yesterday an account of the founding of the League, and——

STENSGÅRD.

I can't give it you; it must wait till another time.

ASLAKSEN.

Impossible, Mr. Stensgård; the paper appears to-morrow morning.

STENSGÅRD.

Nonsense! It has all to be altered. The matter has entered on a new phase; new forces have come into play. What I said about Chamberlain Bratsberg must be entirely recast before it can appear.

ASLAKSEN.

Oh, that about the Chamberlain, t h a t ' s in type already.

STENSGÅRD.

Then it must come out of type again.

ASLAKSEN.

Not go in?

STENSGÅRD.

I won't have it published in that form. Why do you stare at me? Do you think I don't know how to manage the affairs of the League?

ASLAKSEN.

Oh, certainly; but you must let me tell you——

STENSGÅRD.

No arguing, Aslaksen; that I can't and won't stand!

ASLAKSEN.

Do you know, Mr. Stensgård, that you are doing your best to take the bread out of my mouth? Do you know that?

STENSGÅRD.

No; I know nothing of the sort.

ASLAKSEN.

But you are. Last winter, before you came here, my paper was looking up. I edited it myself, I must tell you, and I edited it on a principle.

STENSGÅRD.

You?

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, I!—I said to myself: it's the great public that supports a paper; now the great public is the bad public—that comes of the local situation; and the bad public will have a bad paper. So you see I edited it——

STENSGÅRD.

Badly! Yes, that's undeniable.

ASLAKSEN.

Well, and I prospered by it. But then you came and brought ideas into the district. The paper took on a colour, and then Lundestad's supporters all fell away. The subscribers that are left won't pay their subscriptions——

STENSGÅRD.

Ah, but the paper has become a good one.

ASLAKSEN.

I can't live on a good paper. You were to make things lively; you were to grapple with abuses, as you promised yesterday. The bigwigs were to be pilloried; the paper was to be filled with things people were bound to read—and now, you leave me in the lurch——

STENSGÅRD.

Ho-ho! You think I am going to keep you supplied with libels! No, thank you, my good sir!

ASLAKSEN.

Mr. Stensgård, you mustn't drive me to desperation, or you'll repent it.

STENSGÅRD.

What do you mean?

ASLAKSEN.

I mean that I must make the paper pay in another way. Heaven knows I should be sorry to do it. Before you came I made an honest living out of accidents and suicides and other harmless things, that often hadn't even happened. But now you have turned everything topsy-turvy; people now want very different fare——

STENSGÅRD.

Just let me tell you this: if you break loose in any way, if you go a single step beyond my orders, and try to exploit the movement in your own dirty interests, I'll go to the opposition printer and start a new paper. We have money, you must know! We can bring your rag to ruin in a fortnight.

ASLAKSEN.

[*Pale.*] You wouldn't do that!

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, I would; and you'll see I can edit a paper so as to appeal to the great public.

ASLAKSEN.

Then I'll go this instant to Chamberlain Bratsberg——

STENSGÅRD.

You? What have you to do with him?

ASLAKSEN.

What have y o u to do with him? Do you think I don't know why you are invited here? It's because he is afraid of you, and of what you may do; and you are making capital of that. But if he's afraid of what you may do, he'll be no less afraid of what I may print; and *I* will make capital of that!

STENSGÅRD.

Would you dare to? A wretched creature like you——!

ASLAKSEN.

I'll soon show you. If your speech is to be kept out of the paper, the Chamberlain shall pay me for keeping it out.

STENSGÅRD.

Try it; just try it! You're drunk, fellow——!

ASLAKSEN.

Only in moderation. But I'll fight like a lion if you try to take my poor crust out of my mouth. Little you know what sort of a home mine is: a bedridden wife, a crippled child——

STENSGÅRD.

Off with you! Do you think I want to be soiled with your squalor? What are your bedridden wives and deformed brats to me? If you stand in my way, if you dare so much as to obstruct a single one of my prospects, you shall be on the parish before the year's out!

ASLAKSEN.

I'll wait o n e day——

STENSGÅRD.

Ah, you're coming to your senses.

ASLAKSEN.

I shall announce to the subscribers in a handbill that in consequence of an indisposition contracted at the fête, the editor——

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, do so; I daresay, later on, we shall come to an understanding.

ASLAKSEN.

I trust we may.—Remember this, Mr. Stensgård: that paper is my one ewe lamb. [*Goes out by the back.*

LUNDESTAD.

[*At the foremost garden door.*] Ah, Mr. Stensgård!

STENSGÅRD.

Ah, Mr. Lundestad!

LUNDESTAD.

You here alone? If you have no objection, I should like to have a little talk with you.

STENSGÅRD.

With pleasure.

LUNDESTAD.

In the first place, let me say that if any one has told you that I have said anything to your disadvantage, you mustn't believe it.

STENSGÅRD.

To my disadvantage? What do you mean?

LUNDESTAD.

Oh, nothing; nothing, I assure you. You see, there are so many busybodies here, that go about doing nothing but setting people by the ears.

STENSGÅRD.

Well, on the whole—I'm afraid our relations a r e a little strained.

LUNDESTAD.

They are quite natural relations, Mr. Stensgård: the relation of the old to the new; it is always so.

211394A

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, come, Mr. Lundestad, you are not so old as all that.

LUNDESTAD.

Yes indeed, I'm getting old. I have held my seat ever since 1839. It's time I should be relieved.

STENSGÅRD.

Relieved?

LUNDESTAD.

Times change, you see. New problems arise, and for their solution we want new forces.

STENSGÅRD.

Now, frankly, Mr. Lundestad—are you really going to give up your seat to Monsen?

LUNDESTAD.

To Monsen? No, certainly not to Monsen.

STENSGÅRD.

Then I don't understand——

LUNDESTAD.

Suppose, now, I did retire in Monsen's favour: do you think he would be elected?

STENSGÅRD.

It's hard to say. As the preliminary election comes on the day after to-morrow, there may scarcely be time to prepare the public mind; but——

LUNDESTAD.

I don't believe he would manage it. The Chamberlain's party, my party, would not vote for him. Of course "my party" is a figure of speech: I mean the men of property, the old families, who are settled on their own land and belong to it. They won't have anything to do with Monsen. Monsen is a newcomer; no one really knows anything about Monsen and his affairs. And then he has had to cut down so much to clear a place for himself—to fell both trees and men, you may say.

STENSGÅRD.

Well then, if you think he has no chance——

LUNDESTAD.

H'm! You are a man of rare gifts, Mr. Stensgård. Providence has dealt lavishly with you. But it has made one little oversight: it ought to have given you one thing more.

STENSGÅRD.

And what may that be?

LUNDESTAD.

Tell me—why do you never think of yourself? Why have you no ambition?

STENSGÅRD.

Ambition? I?

LUNDESTAD.

Why do you waste all your strength on other people? In one word—why not go into Parliament yourself?

STENSGÅRD.

I? You are not serious?

LUNDESTAD.

Why not? You have qualified, I hear. And if you don't seize this opportunity, then some one else will come in; and when once he is firm in the saddle, it may not be so easy to unseat him.

STENSGÅRD.

Great heavens, Mr. Lundestad! do you really mean what you say?

LUNDESTAD.

Oh, I don't want to commit you; if you don't care about it——

STENSGÅRD.

Not care about it! Well, I must confess I'm not so utterly devoid of ambition as you suppose. But do you really think it possible?

LUNDESTAD.

Oh, there's nothing impossible about it. I should do my best, and so, no doubt, would the Chamberlain; he knows your oratorical gifts. You have the young men on your side——

STENSGÅRD.

Mr. Lundestad, by heaven, you are my true friend!

LUNDESTAD.

Oh, you don't mean much by that. If you really looked upon me as a friend, you would relieve me of this burden. You have young shoulders; you could bear it so easily.

STENSGÅRD.

I place myself entirely at your disposal; I will not fail you.

LUNDESTAD.

Then you are really not disinclined to——

STENSGÅRD.

Here's my hand on it!

LUNDESTAD.

Thanks! Believe me, Mr. Stensgård, you will not regret it. But now we must go warily to work. We must both of us take care to be on the electoral college —I to propose you as my successor, and put you through your facings before the rest; and you to give an account of your views——

STENSGÅRD.

If we once get so far, we are safe. In the electoral college you are omnipotent.

LUNDESTAD.

There is a limit to omnipotence. You must of course bring your oratory into play; you must take care to explain away anything that might seem really awkward or objectionable——

STENSGÅRD.

You don't mean that I am to break with my party?

LUNDESTAD.

Now just look at the thing reasonably. What do we mean when we talk of two parties? We have, on the one hand, certain men or families who are in possession of the common civic advantages—I mean property, independence, and power. That is the party I belong to. On the other hand, we have the mass of our younger fellow citizens who want to share in these advantages. That is your party. But that party you will quite naturally and properly pass out of when you get into power—to say nothing of taking up a solid position as a man of property—for of course t h a t is essential, Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, I believe it is. But the time is short; and such a position is not to be attained in a day.

LUNDESTAD.

That's true; but perhaps the prospect of such a position would be enough——

STENSGÅRD.

The prospect——?

LUNDESTAD.

Have you any rooted objection to a good marriage, Mr. Stensgård? There are heiresses in the country-

side. A man like you, with a future before him—a man who can reckon on attaining the highest offices—believe me, you needn't fear a repulse if you play your cards neatly.

STENSGÅRD.

Then, for heaven's sake, help me in the game! You open wide vistas to me—great visions! All that I have hoped and longed for, and that seemed so dreamlike and far away, stands suddenly before me in living reality—to lead the people forward towards emancipation, to——

LUNDESTAD.

Yes, we must keep our eyes open, Mr. Stensgård. I see your ambition is already on the alert. That's well. The rest will come of itself.—In the meantime, thanks! I shall never forget your readiness to take the burden of office from my old shoulders.

[*The whole party gradually enters from the garden. Two maid-servants bring in candles and hand round refreshments during the following scene.*

SELMA.

[*Goes towards the piano at the back, left.*] Mr. Stensgård, you must join us; we are going to have a game of forfeits.

STENSGÅRD.

With pleasure; I am just in the mood.

[*Follows her towards the back, makes arrangements with her, places chairs, etc., etc.*

ERIK BRATSBERG.

[*In an undertone.*] What the deuce is this my father is saying, Mr. Heire? What speech has Mr. Stensgård been making yesterday?

HEIRE.

Hee-hee! Don't you know about it?

ERIK.

No; we townspeople had our dinner and ball at the Club. My father declares Mr. Stensgård has entirely broken with the Stonelee gang—that he was frightfully rude to Monsen——

HEIRE.

To Monsen! No, you must have misunderstood him, my dear sir.

ERIK.

Well, there were a whole lot of people about, so that I couldn't quite follow what he said; but I certainly heard——

HEIRE.

Wait till to-morrow—— I say no more. You'll have the whole story with your coffee, in Aslaksen's paper.

[*They separate.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Well, my dear Lundestad, are you sticking to those crotchets of yours?

LUNDESTAD.

They are no crotchets, Chamberlain; rather than be ousted, one should give way gracefully.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Nonsense; who is dreaming of ousting you?

LUNDESTAD.

H'm; I'm an old weather-prophet. There has been a change in the wind. Besides, I have my successor ready. Mr. Stensgård is willing——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Mr. Stensgård?

LUNDESTAD.

Wasn't that what you meant? I took it for a hint when you said he was a man we must make friends with and support.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I meant in his onslaught upon all the corruption and swindling that goes on at Stonelee.

LUNDESTAD.

But how could you count so confidently upon his breaking with that crew?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

He did it openly enough last evening, my dear fellow.

LUNDESTAD.

Last evening?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, when he spoke of Monsen's deplorable influence in the district.

LUNDESTAD.

[*Open-mouthed.*] Of Monsen's——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Of course; that time on the table——

LUNDESTAD.

On the table? Yes?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

He was frightfully rude; called him a money-bag, and a griffin or a basilisk, or something. Ha-ha!—it was great sport to hear him.

LUNDESTAD.

Great sport, was it?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, I own I'm not sorry to see these people a little roughly handled. But now we must back him up; for after such a savage attack——

LUNDESTAD.

As that of yesterday, you mean?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Of course.

LUNDESTAD

Upon the table?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, upon the table.

LUNDESTAD.

Against Monsen?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, against Monsen and his set. Of course they'll try to have their revenge; you can't blame them——

LUNDESTAD.

[*Decidedly.*] Mr. Stensgård must be supported—that is clear!

THORA.

Father dear, you must join in the game.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, nonsense, child——

THORA.

Yes. indeed you must; Selma insists upon it.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Very well, I suppose I must give in. [*In an undertone as they go towards the back.*] I'm quite distressed about Lundestad; he is really failing; fancy, he didn't in the least understand what Stensgård——

THORA.

Oh, come, come; they've begun the game.

[*She drags him into the circle of young people where the game is in full swing.*

ERIK.

[*Calls from his place.*] Mr. Heire, you are appointed forfeit-judge.

HEIRE.

Hee-hee! It's the first appointment I ever had.

STENSGÅRD.

[*Also in the circle.*] On account of your legal experience, Mr. Heire.

HEIRE.

Oh, my amiable young friends, I should be delighted to sentence you all—— I say no more!

STENSGÅRD.

[*Slips up to* LUNDESTAD, *who stands in front on the left.*] You were speaking to the Chamberlain. What about? Was it about me?

LUNDESTAD.

Now is your chance to atone for it.

ERIK.

[*Calls.*] Mr. Stensgård, it's your turn.

STENSGÅRD.

Coming! [*Quickly to* LUNDESTAD.] What do you mean?

LUNDESTAD.

Find an opportunity and apologise to the Chamberlain.

STENSGÅRD.

By heaven, I will!

SELMA.

Make haste, make haste!

STENSGÅRD.

I'm coming! Here I am!

[*The game goes on with noise and laughter. Some elderly gentlemen play cards on the right.* LUNDESTAD *takes a seat on the left;* DANIEL HEIRE *near him.*

HEIRE.

That whelp twits me with my legal experience, does he?

LUNDESTAD.

He's rather free with his tongue, that's certain

HEIRE.

And so the whole family goes and fawns upon him. Hee-hee! They're pitifully afraid of him.

LUNDESTAD.

No, there you are wrong, Mr. Heire; the Chamberlain is not afraid of him.

HEIRE.

Not afraid? Do you think I'm blind, my good sir?

LUNDESTAD.

No, but—I can trust you to keep the secret? Well, I'll tell you all about it. The Chamberlain thinks it was Monsen he was attacking.

HEIRE.

Monsen? Oh, absurd!

HEIRE.

Hee-hee! I'll pay him back with interest!

LUNDESTAD.

Take care! The Chamberlain is powerful. Don't play tricks in the lion's den!

HEIRE.

Bratsberg a lion? Pooh, he's a blockhead, sir, and I am not. Oh, won't I get a rare crop of taunts, and jibes, and innuendoes out of this, when once our great suit comes on!

SELMA.

[*Calls from the circle.*] Learned judge, what shall the owner of this forfeit do?

ERIK.

[*Unnoticed, to* HEIRE.] It's Stensgård's! Think of something amusing.

HEIRE.

That forfeit? Hee-hee, let me see; he might, for example—yes—he shall make a speech!

SELMA.

It's Mr. Stensgård's forfeit.

ERIK.

Mr. Stensgård is to make a speech.

STENSGÅRD.

Oh no, spare me that; I came off badly enough last night.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Excellently, Mr. Stensgård; I know something of public speaking.

LUNDESTAD.

[*To* HEIRE.] If only he doesn't put his foot in it now.

HEIRE.

Put his foot in it? Hee-hee! You're a sharp one! That's an inspiration! [*In an undertone to* STENSGÅRD.] If you came off badly last night, why not put yourself right again to-night?

STENSGÅRD.

STENSGÅRD.

Fill your glasses, ladies and gentlemen! I am going to make a speech which shall begin with a fable; for here I seem to breathe the finer air of fable-land.

ERIK.

[*To the* LADIES.] Hush! Listen!

[*The* CHAMBERLAIN *takes his glass from the card table on the right, beside which he remains standing.* RINGDAL, FIELDBO, *and one or two other gentlemen come in from the garden.*

STENSGÅRD.

It was in the spring time. There came a young cuckoo flying over the uplands. Now the cuckoo is an adventurer. There was a great Bird-Parliament on the meadow beneath him, and both wild and tame fowl flocked to it. They came tripping out of the hen-yards; they waddled up from the goose-ponds; down from Stonelee hulked a fat capercailzie, flying low and noisily; he settled down, and ruffled his feathers and flapped his wings, and made himself even broader than he was; and every now and then he crowed: "Krak, krak, krak!" as much as to say: I'm the game-cock from Stonelee, I am!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Capital! Hear, hear!

STENSGÅRD.

And then there was an old woodpecker. He bustled up and down the tree-trunks, pecking with his pointed

beak, and gorging himself with grubs and everything that turns to gall. To right and left you heard him going: prik, prik, prik! And that was the woodpecker.

ERIK.

Excuse me, wasn't it a stork, or a——?[1]

HEIRE.

Say no more!

STENSGÅRD.

That was the old woodpecker. But now there came life into the crew; for they found something to cackle evil about. And they flustered together, and cackled in chorus, until at last the young cuckoo began to join in the cackling——

FIELDBO.

[*Unnoticed.*] For God's sake, man, be quiet!

STENSGÅRD.

Now it was an eagle they cackled about—an eagle who dwelt in lonely dignity upon a beetling cliff.[2] They were all agreed about him. "He's a bugbear to the neighbourhood," croaked a hoarse raven. But the eagle swooped down into their midst, seized the cuckoo, and bore him aloft to his eyrie.—Heart conquered heart! From that clear summit the adventurer-cuckoo looked far and wide over the lowlands; there he found sunshine and peace; and there he learned to judge aright the swarm from the hen-yards and the clearings——

[1] As before stated, "Heire" means a heron.
[2] "Et brat fjeld"—an allusion to the name Bratsberg.

FIELDBO.

[*Loudly.*] Bravo, bravo! And now some music.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Hush! Don't interrupt him.

STENSGÅRD.

Chamberlain Bratsberg—here my fable ends; and here I stand before you, in the presence of every one, to beg your forgiveness for last night.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Falls a step backwards.*] Mine——?

STENSGÅRD.

I thank you for the magnanimous vengeance you have taken for my senseless words. In me you have henceforth a faithful champion. And now, ladies and gentlemen, I drink the health of the eagle on the mountain-top—the health of Chamberlain Bratsberg.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Clutching at the table.*] Thank you, Mr.—Mr. Stensgård.

THE GUESTS.

[*For the most part in painful embarrassment.*] The Chamberlain! Chamberlain Bratsberg!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Ladies! Gentlemen! [*Softly.*] Thora!

THORA.

Father!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, Doctor, Doctor, what have you done!

STENSGÅRD.

[*With his glass in his hand, radiant with self-satisfaction.*] Now to our places again! Hullo, Fieldbo! Come, join in—join in the League of Youth! The game's going merrily!

HEIRE.

[*In front, on the left.*] Yes, on my soul, the game's going merrily!

[LUNDESTAD *slips out by the door in the back.*

ACT THIRD

An elegant morning-room, with entrance-door in the back. On the left, the door of the CHAMBERLAIN'S *study; further back, a door leading to the drawing-room. On the right, a door leading to* RINGDAL'S *offices; further forward, a window.*

THORA *is seated on the sofa, left, weeping. The* CHAMBERLAIN *paces angrily up and down.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, now we have the epilogue—tears and lamentations——

THORA.

Oh, that we had never seen that man!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What man?

THORA.

That wretched Mr. Stensgård, of course.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

You should rather say: Oh, that we had never seen that wretched Doctor.

THORA.

Doctor Fieldbo?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, Fieldbo, Fieldbo! Wasn't it he that palmed off a parcel of lies upon me——?

THORA.

No, my dear father, it was I.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

You? Well, then, both of you! You were his accomplice—behind my back. A nice state of affairs!

THORA.

Oh, father, if you only knew——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, I know enough; more than enough; much more!

DR. FIELDBO *enters from the back.*

FIELDBO.

Good morning, Chamberlain! Good morning, Miss Bratsberg!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Still pacing the room.*] So you are there, are you—bird of evil omen!

FIELDBO.

Yes, it was a very unpleasant affair.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Looking out at the window.*] Oh, you think so?

FIELDBO.

You must have noticed how I kept my eye upon Stensgård all the evening. Unfortunately, when I heard there was to be a game of forfeits, I thought there was no danger——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Stamping on the floor.*] To be made a laughing-stock by such a windbag! What must my guests have thought of me? That I was mean enough to want to buy this creature, this—this——as Lundestad calls him!

FIELDBO.

Yes, but——

THORA.

[*Unnoticed by her father.*] Don't speak!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*After a short pause, turns to* FIELDBO.] Tell me frankly, Doctor:—Am I really denser than the general run of people?

FIELDBO.

How can you ask such a question, Chamberlain?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Then how did it happen that I was probably the only person there who didn't understand that that confounded speech was meant for me?

FIELDBO.

Shall I tell you why?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Certainly.

FIELDBO.

It is because you yourself regard your position in the district differently from other people.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I regard my position as my father before me regarded his. No one would ever have ventured to treat him so.

FIELDBO.

Your father died about the year 1830.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, yes; many a barrier has broken down since that time. But, after all, it's my own fault. I have mixed myself up too much with these good people. So now I must be content to have my name coupled with Anders Lundestad's!

FIELDBO.

Well, frankly, I see no disgrace in that.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, you know quite well what I mean. Of course I don't plume myself on rank, or titles, or anything of that sort. But what I hold in honour, and expect others to hold in honour, is the integrity handed down in our family from generation to generation. What I mean is that when a man like Lundestad goes into public life, he cannot keep his character and his conduct entirely free

from stain. In the general mud-throwing, he is sure to find himself bespattered. But they might leave me in peace; I stand outside their parties.

FIELDBO.

Not so entirely, Chamberlain; at least you were delighted so long as you thought it was Monsen that was attacked.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Don't mention that fellow!—It is he that has relaxed the moral sense of the district. And now he has gone and turned my son's head, confound him!

THORA.

Erik's?

FIELDBO.

Your son's?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes; what tempted him to go and set up in business? It leads to nothing.

FIELDBO.

Why, my dear Chamberlain, he must live and——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, with economy he could quite well live on the money that came to him from his mother.

FIELDBO.

He might perhaps live on it; but what could he live for?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

For? Well, if he absolutely must have something to live for, hasn't he qualified as a lawyer? He might live for his profession.

FIELDBO.

No, that he couldn't do; it is against his nature. Then there was no official appointment he could well hope for; you have kept the management of your property in your own hands; and your son has no children to educate. Under these circumstances, when he sees tempting examples around him—people who have started from nothing and are worth their half million——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Their half million! Oh, come now, let us keep to the hundred thousands. But neither the half million nor the hundred thousands can be scraped together with perfectly clean hands;—I don't mean in the eyes of the world; Heaven knows it is easy enough to keep within the law; but in respect to one's own conscience. Of course my son cannot descend to anything questionable; so you may be quite sure Mr. Erik Bratsberg's financial operations won't bring in any half millions.

SELMA, *in walking dress, enters from the back.*

SELMA.

Good morning! Is Erik not here?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Good morning, child! Are you looking for your husband?

SELMA.

Yes, he said he was coming here. Mr. Monsen called upon him early this morning, and then——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Monsen? Does Monsen come to your house?

SELMA.

Now and then; generally on business. Why, my dear Thora, what's the matter? Have you been crying?

THORA.

Oh, it's nothing.

SELMA.

No, it's n o t nothing! At home Erik was out of humour, and here—— I can see it in your looks: there is something wrong. What is it?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Nothing you need trouble about, at any rate. You are too dainty to carry burdens, my little Selma. Go into the drawing-room for the present. If Erik said he was coming, he will be here soon, no doubt.

SELMA.

Come, Thora—and be sure you don't let me sit in a draught! [*Embracing her.*] Oh, I could hug the life out of you, my sweet Thora!

[*The two ladies go off to the left.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

So they are hand in glove, are they, the two speculators! They should go into partnership. Monsen and Bratsberg—how nice it would sound! [*A knock at the door in the back.*] Come in!

STENSGÅRD *enters.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Recoiling a step.*] What is this?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, here I am again, Chamberlain!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

So I see.

FIELDBO.

Are you mad, Stensgård?

STENSGÅRD.

You retired early yesterday evening. When Fieldbo had explained to me how matters stood, you had already——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Excuse me—all explanations are superfluous——

STENSGÅRD.

I understand that; therefore I have not come to make any.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, indeed?

STENSGÅRD.

I know I have insulted you.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I know that too; and before I have you turned out, perhaps you will be good enough to tell me why you are here.

STENSGÅRD.

Because I love your daughter, Chamberlain!

FIELDBO.

What——!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What does he say, Doctor?

STENSGÅRD.

Ah, you can't grasp the idea, Chamberlain. You are an old man; you have nothing to fight for——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

And you presume to——?

STENSGÅRD.

I am here to ask for your daughter's hand, Chamberlain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

You—— you——? Won't you sit down?

STENSGÅRD.

Thanks, I prefer to stand.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What do you say to this, Doctor?

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, Fieldbo is on my side; he is my friend; the only true friend I have.

FIELDBO.

No, no, man! Never in this world, if you——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Perhaps it was with this view that Doctor Fieldbo secured his friend's introduction into my house?

STENSGÅRD.

You know me only by my exploits of yesterday and the day before. That is not enough. Besides, I am not the same man to-day that I was then. My intercourse with you and yours has fallen like spring showers upon my spirit, making it put forth new blossoms in a single night! You must not hurl me back into my sordid past. Till now, I have never been at home with the beautiful in life; it has always been beyond my reach——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

But my daughter——?

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, I shall win her.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Indeed? H'm!

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, for I have will on my side. Remember what you told me yesterday. You were opposed to your son's marriage—and see how it has turned out! You must put on the glasses of experience, as Fieldbo said——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Ah, that was what you meant?

FIELDBO.

Not in the least! My dear Chamberlain, let me speak to him alone——

STENSGÅRD.

Nonsense; I have nothing to speak to y o u about. Now, pray be reasonable, Chamberlain! A family like yours needs new alliances, or its brains stagnate——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh. this is too much!

STENSGÅRD.

Now, now, don't get angry! These high-and-mighty airs are unworthy of you—of course you know they are all nonsense at bottom. You shall see how much you'll value me when you come to know me. Yes, yes; you s h a l l value me—both you and your daughter! I will make her——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What do you think of this, Doctor?

FIELDBO.

I think it's madness.

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, it would be in you; but I, you see—I have sion to fulfil on God's beautiful earth;—I am not deterred by nonsensical prejudices.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Mr. Stensgård, there is the door.

STENSGÅRD.

You show me——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

The door!

STENSGÅRD.

Don't do that!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Out with you! You are an adventurer and s confound my memory! You're a——

STENSGÅRD.

What am I?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

You are—that other thing—it's on the tip o tongue——

STENSGÅRD.

Beware how you block my career!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Beware? Of what?

STENSGÅRD.

I will attack you in the papers, persecute you, libel you, do all I can to undermine your reputation. You shall shriek under the lash. You shall seem to see spirits in the air raining blows upon you. You shall huddle together in dread, and crouch with your arms bent over your head to ward off the strokes—you shall try to creep into shelter——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Creep into shelter yourself—in a madhouse; that is the proper place for you!

STENSGÅRD.

Ha-ha; that is a cheap retort; but you know no better, Mr. Bratsberg! I tell you the wrath of the Lord is in me. It is His will you are opposing. He has destined me for the light—beware how you cast a shadow!—Well, I see I shall make no way with you to-day; but that matters nothing. I only ask you to speak to your daughter—to prepare her—to give her the opportunity of choosing! Reflect, and look around you. Where can you expect to find a son-in-law among these plodding dunces? Fieldbo says she is deep and steadfast and true. So now you know just how matters stand. Good-bye, Chamberlain—I leave you to choose between my friendship and my enmity. Good-bye! [*Goes out by the back.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

So it has come to this! This is how they dare to treat me in my own house!

FIELDBO.

Stensgård dares; no one else would.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

He to-day; others to-morrow.

FIELDBO.

Let them come; I shall keep them off; I would go through fire and water for you——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, you who have caused all the mischief!—H'm; that Stensgård is the most impudent scoundrel I have ever known! And yet, after all—deuce take me if there isn't something I like about him.

FIELDBO.

He has possibilities——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

He has openness, Dr. Fieldbo! He doesn't go playing his own game behind one's back, like so many other people; he—he——!

FIELDBO.

It's not worth disputing about. Only be firm, Chamberlain; no, and no again, to Stensgård——!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, keep your advice to yourself! You may rely upon it that neither he nor any one else——

RINGDAL.

[*Enters by the door on the right.*] Excuse me, Chamberlain; one word—— [*Whispers.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What? In your room?

RINGDAL.

He came in by the back way, and begs you to see him.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

H'm.—Oh, Doctor, just go into the drawing-room for a moment; there's some one here who—— But don't say a word to Selma of Mr. Stensgård and his visit. She must be kept outside all this business. As for my daughter, I should prefer that you should say nothing to her either; but—— Oh, what's the use——? Please go now.

[FIELDBO *goes into the drawing-room.* RINGDAL *has, in the meantime, gone back to his office, whence* MONSEN *presently enters.*

MONSEN.

[*At the door.*] I beg ten thousand pardons, sir——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, come in, come in!

MONSEN.

I trust your family is in good health?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Thank you. Is there anything you want?

MONSEN.

I can't quite put it that way. Thank heaven, I'm one of those that have got pretty nearly all they can want.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, indeed? That is a good deal to say.

MONSEN.

But I've had to work for it, Chamberlain. Oh, I know you regard my work with no very friendly eye.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I cannot suppose that your work is in any way affected by my way of regarding it.

MONSEN.

Who knows? At any rate, I'm thinking of gradually withdrawing from business

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Really?

MONSEN.

The luck has been on my side, I may tell you. I've gone ahead as far as I care to; so now I think it's about time to slack off a little——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Well, I congratulate both you—and other people

MONSEN.

And if I could at the same time do you a service, Chamberlain——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Me?

MONSEN.

When the Langerud woods were put up to auction five years ago, you made a bid for them——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, but you outbade me, and they were knocked down to you.

MONSEN.

You can have them now with the saw-mills and all appurtenances——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

After all your sinful cutting and hacking——!

MONSEN.

Oh, they're worth a good deal still; and with your method of working, in a few years——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Thank you; unfortunately I must decline the proposal.

MONSEN.

There's a great deal of money in it, Chamberlain. As for me,—I may tel' you I have a great speculation on

hand; the stakes are large; I mean there's a big haul to be made—a hundred thousand or so——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

A hundred thousand? That is certainly no trifle.

MONSEN.

Ha ha ha! A nice round sum to add to the pile. But when you're going into a great battle you need reserve forces, as the saying goes. There's not much ready money about; the names that are worth anything are rather used up——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, certain people have taken care of t h a t.

MONSEN.

It's a case of you scratch me, I scratch you. Well, Chamberlain, is it to be a bargain? You shall have the woods at your own figure——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I will not have them at any figure, Mr. Monsen.

MONSEN.

Well, one good offer deserves another. Will you help me, sir?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What do you mean?

MONSEN.

Of course I'll give good security. I have plenty of property. Look here—these papers—just let me explain my position to you.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Waving the papers aside.*] Is it pecuniary aid you want?

MONSEN.

Not ready money; oh, no! But your support, Chamberlain. Of course I'll pay for it—and give security, and——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

And you come to me with such a proposal as this?

MONSEN.

Yes, precisely to you. I know you've often let bygones be bygones when a man was in real straits.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Well, in a way, I must thank you for your good opinion—especially at a time like this; but nevertheless——

MONSEN.

Won't you tell me, Chamberlain, what sets you against me?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, what would be the use?

MONSEN.

It might lead to a better understanding between us. I've never stood in your way that I know of.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

You think not? Then let me tell you of o n e case in which you have stood in my way. I founded the Iron-works Savings Bank for the benefit of my employees and others. But then you must needs set up as a banker; people take their savings to you——

MONSEN.

Naturally, sir, for I give higher interest

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, but you charge higher interest on loans.

MONSEN.

But I don't make so many difficulties about security and so forth.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

That is just the mischief of it; for now we have people making bargains to the tune of ten or twenty thousand dollars,[1] though neither of the parties has so much as a brass farthing. That is what sets me against you, Mr. Monsen. And there is another thing too that touches me still more nearly. Do you think it was with my good will that my son flung himself into all these wild speculations?

[1] The dollar = four crowns = four-and-sixpence, was the unit of coinage at the time this play was written. It has since been replaced by the crown.

MONSEN

But how can I help that?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

It was your example that infected him, as it did the others. Why could you not stick to your last?

MONSEN.

Remain a lumberman, like my father?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Was it a disgrace to be in my employment? Your father made his bread honourably, and was respected in his own class.

MONSEN.

Yes, until he'd almost worked his life out, and at last went over the waterfall with his raft. Do you know anything of life in that class, Chamberlain? Have you ever realised what the men have to endure who toil for you deep in the forests, and along the river-reaches, while you sit comfortably at home and fatten on the profits? Can you blame such a man for struggling to rise in the world? I had had a little more schooling than my father; perhaps I had rather more brains too——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Very likely. But by what means have you risen in the world? You began by selling brandy. Then you bought up doubtful debts, and enforced them mercilessly,—and so you got on and on. How many people have you not ruined to push yourself forward!

MONSEN.

That's the course of business; one up, another down.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

But there are different methods of business. I know of respectable families whom you have brought to the workhouse.

MONSEN.

Daniel Heire is not very far from the workhouse.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I understand you; but I can justify my conduct before God and man! When the country was in distress, after the separation from Denmark, my father made sacrifices beyond his means. Thus part of our property came into the hands of the Heire family. What was the result? The people who lived upon the property suffered under Daniel Heire's incompetent management. He cut down timber to the injury, I may even say to the ruin, of the district. Was it not my obvious duty to put a stop to it if I was able? And it happened that I w a s able; I had the law on my side; I was well within my rights when I re-entered upon my family property.

MONSEN.

I, too, have always had the law on my side.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

But what about your sense of right, your conscience, if you have such a thing? And how you have broken down all social order! How you have impaired the re-

spect that should attach to wealth! People never think of asking nowadays how such and such a fortune was made, or how long it has been in such and such a family; they only ask: how much is so-and-so worth?—and they esteem him accordingly. Now I suffer by all this; I find myself regarded as a sort of associate of yours; people speak of us in one breath, because we are the two largest proprietors in the neighbourhood. This state of things I cannot endure! I tell you once for all: that is why I am set against you.

MONSEN.

This state of things shall come to an end, sir; I will give up business, and make way for you at every point; but I beg you, I implore you, to help me!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I will not.

MONSEN.

I'm willing to pay what you like——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

To pay! And you dare to——!

MONSEN.

If not for my sake, then for your son's!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

My son's!

MONSEN.

Yes, he's in it. I reckon he stands to win some twenty thousand dollars.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Stands to win?

MONSEN.

Yes.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Then, good God, who stands to lose all this money?

MONSEN.

How do you mean?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

If my son wins, some one or other must lose!

MONSEN.

It's a good stroke of business; I'm not in a position to say more. But I need a solid name; only just your endorsement——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Endorsement! On a bill——?

MONSEN.

Only for ten or fifteen thousand dollars.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Do you suppose for a moment that——? My name! In such an affair! My name? As surety, no doubt?

MONSEN.

A mere matter of form——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

A matter of swindling! My name! Not upon any consideration. I have never put my name on other men's paper.

MONSEN.

Never? That's an exaggeration, Chamberlain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

It is the literal truth.

MONSEN.

No, not literal; I've seen it with my own eyes.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What have you seen?

MONSEN.

Your name—on o n e bill at least.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

It is false, I tell you! You have never seen it!

MONSEN.

I have! On a bill for two thousand dollars. Think again!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Neither for two thousand nor for ten thousand! On my sacred word of honour, never!

MONSEN.

Then it's a forgery.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Forgery?

MONSEN.

Yes, a forgery—for I h a v e seen it.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Forgery? Forgery! Where did you see it? In whose hands?

MONSEN.

That I won't tell you.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Ha-ha! We shall soon find that out!

MONSEN.

Listen to me——!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Silence! It has come to this then! Forgery. They must mix me up in their abominations! No wonder, then, that people bracket me with the rest of you. But it is my turn now!

MONSEN.

Chamberlain—for your own sake and for the sake of others——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Off with you! Out of my sight! It is you that are at the root of it all!—Yes you are! Woe unto him from whom offences come. Your home-life is scandalous. What sort of society do you get about you? Persons from Christiania and elsewhere, who think only of eating and drinking, and do not care in what company they gorge themselves. Silence! I have seen with my own eyes your distinguished guests tearing along the roads at Christmas-time like a pack of howling wolves. And there is worse behind. You have had scandals with your own maid-servants. You drove your wife out of her mind by your ill-treatment and debauchery.

MONSEN.

Come, this is going too far! You shall pay for these words!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, to the deuce with your threats! What harm can you do to me? Me? You asked what I had to say against you. Well, I have said it. Now you know why I have kept you out of decent society.

MONSEN.

Yes, and now I'll drag your decent society down——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

That way!

MONSEN.

I know my way, Chamberlain!

[*Goes out by the back.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Opens the door on the right and calls.*] Ringdal, Ringdal—come here!

RINGDAL.

What is it, sir?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Calls into the drawing-room.*] Doctor, please come this way!—Now, Ringdal, now you shall see my prophecies fulfilled.

FIELDBO.

[*Entering.*] What can I do for you, Chamberlain?

RINGDAL.

What prophecies, sir?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What do you say to this, Doctor? You have always accused me of exaggerating when I said that Monsen was corrupting the neighbourhood.

FIELDBO.

Well, what then?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

We are getting on, I can tell you! What do you think? There are forgeries going about.

RINGDAL.

Forgeries?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, forgeries! And whose name do you think they have forged? Why, mine!

FIELDBO.

Who in the world can have done it?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

How can I tell? I don't know all the scoundrels in the district. But we shall soon find out.—Doctor, do me a service. The papers must have come into the hands either of the Savings Bank or the Iron-works Bank. Drive up to Lundestad; he is the director who knows most about things. Find out whether there is any such paper——

FIELDBO.

Certainly; at once.

RINGDAL.

Lundestad is here at the works to-day; there's a meeting of the school committee.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

So much the better. Find him; bring him here.

FIELDBO.

I'll go at once. [*Goes out at the back.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

And you, Ringdal, make inquiries at the Iron-works. As soon as we have got to the bottom of the matter, we'll lay an information. No mercy to the scoundrels!

RINGDAL.

Very good, sir. Bless me, who'd have thought of such a thing? [*Goes out to the right.*

[*The* CHAMBERLAIN *paces the room once or twice, and is then about to go into his study. At that instant* ERIK BRATSBERG *enters from the back.*

ERIK.

My dear father——!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, are you there?

ERIK.

I want so much to speak to you.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

H'm; I'm not much in the humour for speaking to any one. What do you want?

ERIK.

You know I have never mixed you up in my affairs, father.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

No; that is an honour I should certainly have declined.

ERIK.

But now I am forced to——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What are you forced to do?

ERIK.

Father, you must help me!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

With money! You may be very sure that——

ERIK.

Only this once! I swear I'll never again—— The fact is, I am under certain engagements to Monsen of Stonelee——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I know that. You have a brilliant speculation on hand.

ERIK.

A speculation? We? No! Who told you so?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Monsen himself.

ERIK.

Has Monsen been here?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

He has just gone. I showed him the door.

ERIK.

If you don't help me, father, I am ruined.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

You?

ERIK.

Yes. Monsen has advanced me money. I had to pay terribly dear for it; and now the bills have fallen due——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

There we have it! What did I tell you——?

ERIK.

Yes, yes; it's too late now——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Ruined! In two years! But how could you expect anything else? What had you to do among these charlatans that go about dazzling people's eyes with wealth that never existed! They were no company for you. Among people of that sort you must meet cunning with cunning, or you'll go to the wall; you have learnt that now.

ERIK.

Father, will you save me or will you not?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

No; for the last time, no. I will not.

ERIK.

My honour is at stake——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, let us have no big phrases! There's no honour involved in commercial success nowadays; quite the op-

posite, I had almost said. Go home and make up your accounts; pay every man his due, and have done with it, the sooner the better.

ERIK.

Oh, you don't know——

SELMA *and* THORA *enter from the drawing-room.*

SELMA.

Is that Erik's voice?—Good heavens, what is the matter?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Nothing. Go into the drawing-room again.

SELMA.

No, I won't go. I will know. Erik, what is it? Tell me!

ERIK.

It's only that I am ruined!

THORA.

Ruined!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

There, you see!

SELMA.

What is ruined?

ERIK.

Everything.

SELMA.

Do you mean you have lost your money?

ERIK.

Money, house, inheritance—everything!

SELMA.

Is that what you call everything?

ERIK.

Come, let us go, Selma. You are all I have left We must bear the blow together.

SELMA.

The blow? Bear it together? [*With a cry.*] Do think I am fit for that, now?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

For heaven's sake——!

ERIK.

What do you mean?

THORA.

Oh, Selma, take care!

SELMA.

No, I won't take care! I cannot go on lying and sh ming any longer! I must speak the truth. I will "bear" anything!

ERIK.

Selma!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Child, what are you saying?

SELMA.

Oh, how cruel you have been to me! Shamefully—all of you! It was my part always to accept—never to give. I have been like a pauper among you. You never came and demanded a sacrifice of me; I was not fit to bear anything. I hate you! I loathe you!

ERIK.

What can this mean?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

She is ill; she is out of her mind!

SELMA.

How I have thirsted for a single drop of your troubles, your anxieties! But when I begged for it you only laughed me off. You have dressed me up like a doll; you have played with me as you would play with a child. Oh, what a joy it would have been to me to take my share in your burdens! How I longed, how I yearned, for a large, and high, and strenuous part in life! Now you come to me, Erik, now that you have nothing else left. But I will not be treated simply as a last resource. I will have nothing to do with your troubles now. I won't stay with you! I will rather play and sing in the streets——! Let me be! Let me be!

[*She rushes out by the back.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Thora, was there any meaning in all that, or——

THORA.

Oh, yes, there was meaning in it; if only I had seen it sooner. [*Goes out by the back.*

ERIK.

No! All else I can lose, but not her! Selma, Selma! [*Follows* THORA *and* SELMA.

RINGDAL.

[*Enters from the right.*] Chamberlain!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Well, what is it?

RINGDAL.

I have been to the Bank——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

The Bank? Oh, yes, about the bill——

RINGDAL.

It's all right; they have never had any bill endorsed by you——

FIELDBO *and* LUNDESTAD *enter by the back.*

FIELDBO.

False alarm, Chamberlain!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Indeed? Not at the Savings Bank either?

LUNDESTAD.

Certainly not. During all the years I've been a director I have never once seen your name; except, of course, on your son's bill.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

My son's bill?

LUNDESTAD.

Yes, the bill you accepted for him early this spring.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

My son? My son? Do you dare to tell me——?

LUNDESTAD.

Why, bless me, just think a moment; the bill for two thousand dollars drawn by your son——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Groping for a chair.*] Oh, my God——!

FIELDBO.

For heaven's sake——!

RINGDAL.

It's not possible that——!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Who has sunk down on a chair.*] Quietly, quietly! Drawn by my son, you say? Accepted by me? For two thousand dollars?

FIELDBO.

[*To* LUNDESTAD.] And this bill is in the Savings Bank?

LUNDESTAD.

Not now; it was redeemed last week by Monsen——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

By Monsen——?

RINGDAL.

Monsen may still be at the works; I'll go——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Stop here!

DANIEL HEIRE *enters by the back.*

HEIRE.

Good morning, gentlemen! Good morning, Chamberlain! Thank you so much for the delightful evening we spent yesterday. What do you think I've just heard——?

RINGDAL.

Excuse me; we are busy——

HEIRE.

So are other people, I can tell you; our friend from Stonelee, for example ——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Monsen?

HEIRE.

Hee-hee; it's a pretty story! The electioneering intrigues are in full swing. And what do you think is the last idea? They are going to bribe you, Chamberlain!

LUNDESTAD.

To bribe——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

They judge the tree by its fruit.

HEIRE.

Deuce take me if it isn't the most impudent thing I ever heard of! I just looked in at Madam Rundholmen's to have a glass of bitters. There sat Messrs. Monsen and Stensgård drinking port—filthy stuff! I wouldn't touch it; but they might have had the decency to offer me a glass, all the same. However, Monsen turned to me and said, "What do you bet that Chamberlain Bratsberg won't go with our party at the preliminary election to-morrow?" "Indeed," said I, "how's that to be managed?" "Oh," he said, "this bill will persuade him——"

FIELDBO.

Bill——?

LUNDESTAD.

At the election——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Well? What then?

HEIRE.

Oh, I know no more. They said something about two thousand dollars. That's the figure they rate a gentleman's conscience at! Oh, it's abominable, I say!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

A bill for two thousand dollars?

RINGDAL.

And Monsen has it?

HEIRE.

No, he handed it over to Stensgård.

LUNDESTAD.

Indeed!

FIELDBO.

To Stensgård?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Are you sure of that?

HEIRE.

Quite certain. "You can make what use you please of it," he said. But I don't understand——

LUNDESTAD.

I want to speak to you, Mr. Heire—and you too, Ringdal. [*The three converse in a whisper at the back.*

FIELDBO.

Chamberlain!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Well?

FIELDBO.

Your son's bill is genuine, of course——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

One would suppose so.

FIELDBO.

Of course. But now if the forged bill were to turn up——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I will lay no information.

FIELDBO.

Naturally not;—but you must do more.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Rising.*] I can do no more.

FIELDBO.

Yes, for heaven's sake, you can and must. You must save the poor fellow——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

In what way?

FIELDBO.

Quite simply: by acknowledging the signature.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Then you think, Doctor, that we stick at nothing our family?

FIELDBO.

I am trying to think for the best, Chamberlain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

And do you believe for a moment that I can te lie?—that I can play into the hands of forgers?

FIELDBO.

And do you realise what will be the consequence you do not?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

The offender must settle that with the law.

[*He goes out to the*

ACT FOURTH

A public room in MADAM RUNDHOLMEN'S *hotel. Entrance door in the back; a smaller door on either side. A window on the right; before it, a table with writing materials; further back, in the middle of the room, another table.*

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

[*Within, on the left, heard talking loudly.*] Oh, let them go about their business! Tell them they've come here to vote and not to drink. If they won't wait, they can do the other thing.

STENSGÅRD.

[*Enters by the back.*] Good morning! H'm, h'm, Madam Rundholmen! [*Goes to the door on the left and knocks.*] Good morning, Madam Rundholmen!

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

[*Within.*] Oh! Who's there?

STENSGÅRD.

It is I—Stensgård. May I come in?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

No, indeed you mustn't! No! I'm not dress'd.

STENSGÅRD.

What? Are you so late to-day?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Oh, I can tell you I've been up since all hours; but one must look a little decent, you know. [*Peeps out, with a kerchief over her head.*] Well, what is it? No, you really mustn't look at me, Mr. Stensgård.—Oh, there's some one else! [*Disappears, slamming the door to.*

ASLAKSEN.

[*Enters from the back with a bundle of papers.*] Good morning, Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD.

Well, is it in?

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, here it is. Look—"The Independence Day Celebrations—From our Special Correspondent." Here's the founding of the League on the other side, and your speech up here. I've leaded all the abuse.

STENSGÅRD.

It seems to me it's all leaded.

ASLAKSEN.

Pretty nearly.

STENSGÅRD.

And the extra number was of course distributed yesterday?

ASLAKSEN.

Of course; all over the district, both to subscribers and others. Would you like to see it? [*Hands him a copy.*

STENSGÅRD.

[*Running his eye over the paper.*] "Our respected member, Mr. Lundestad, proposes to resign . . . long and faithful service . . . in the words of the poet: 'Rest, patriot, it is thy due!'" H'm! "The association founded on Independence Day: the League of Youth . . . Mr. Stensgård, the guiding intelligence of the League . . . timely reforms, credit on easier terms." Ah, that's very good. Has the polling begun?

ASLAKSEN.

It's in full swing. The whole League is on the spot—both voters and others.

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, deuce take the others—between ourselves, of course. Well, you go down and talk to the waverers.

ASLAKSEN.

All right.

STENSGÅRD.

You can tell them that I am pretty much at one with Lundestad——

ASLAKSEN.

Trust to me; I know the local situation.

STENSGÅRD.

One thing more; just to oblige me, Aslaksen, don't drink to-day.

ASLAKSEN.

Oh, what do you mean——!

STENSGÅRD.

We'll have a jolly evening when it's all over; but remember what you, as well as I, have at stake; your paper—— Come, now, my good fellow, let me see that you can——

ASLAKSEN.

There, that's enough now; I'm old enough to look after myself. [*Goes out to the right.*

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

[*Enters from the left, elaborately dressed.*] Now, Mr. Stensgård, I'm at your service. Is it anything of importance——?

STENSGÅRD.

No, only that I want you to be good enough to let me know when Mr. Monsen comes.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

He won't be here to-day.

STENSGÅRD.

Not to-day?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

No; he drove past here at four this morning; he's always driving about nowadays. What's more, he came in and roused me out of bed—he wanted to borrow money, you must know.

STENSGÅRD.

Monsen did?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Yes. He's a tremendous man to get through money is Monsen. I hope things may turn out all right for him. And I say the same to you; for I hear you're going into Parliament?

STENSGÅRD.

I? Nonsense. Who told you so?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Oh, some of Mr. Lundestad's people.

DANIEL HEIRE.

[*Enters from the back.*] Hee-hee! Good morning! I'm not in the way, am I?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Gracious, no!

HEIRE.

Good God, how resplendent! Can it be for me that you've got yourself up like this?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Of course. It's for you bachelors we get ourselves up, isn't it?

HEIRE.

For marrying men, Madam Rundholmen; for marrying men! Unfortunately, my law-suits take up all my time——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Oh, nonsense; you've always plenty of time to get married.

HEIRE.

No; deuce take me if I have! Marriage is a thing you've got to give your whole mind to. Well, well—if you can't have me, you must put up with somebody else. For you ought to marry again.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Now, do you know, I'm sometimes of the same opinion.

HEIRE.

Naturally; when once one has tasted the joys of matrimony—— Of course, poor Rundholmen was one in a thousand——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Well, I won't go so far as that; he was a bit rough, and rather too fond of his glass; but a husband's always a husband.

HEIRE.

Very true, Madam Rundholmen; a husband's a husband, and a widow's a widow——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

And business is business. Oh, when I think of all I've got to attend to, I don't know whether I'm on my heels or my head. Every one wants to buy; but when it comes to paying, I've got to go in for summonses and executions, and Lord knows what. Upon my word, I'll soon have to engage a lawyer all to myself.

HEIRE.

I'll tell you what, Madam Rundholmen, you should retain Mr. Stensgård; he's a bachelor.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Oh, how you do talk! I won't listen to a word more. [*Goes out to the right.*

HEIRE.

A substantial woman, sir! Comfortable and well-preserved; no children up to date; money well invested. Education too; she's widely read, sir.

STENSGÅRD.

Widely read, eh?

HEIRE.

Hee-hee; she ought to be; she had charge of Alm's circulating library for a couple of years. But your head's full of other things to-day, I daresay.

STENSGÅRD.

Not at all; I don't even know that I shall vote. Who are you going to vote for, Mr. Heire?

HEIRE.

Haven't got a vote, sir. There was only one kennel that would qualify in the market, and that you bought.

STENSGÅRD.

If you're at a loss for a lodging, I'll give it up to you.

HEIRE.

Hee-hee, you're joking. Ah, youth, youth! What a pleasant humour it has! But now I must be off and have a look at the menagerie. I'm told your whole League is afoot. [*Sees* FIELDBO, *who enters from the back.*] Here's

FIELDBO.

Yes.

STENSGÅRD.

And what did he say?

FIELDBO.

What did he say?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes; you know I have written to him.

FIELDBO.

Have you? What did you write?

STENSGÅRD.

That I am still of the same mind about his daughter; that I want to talk the matter over with him; and that I propose to call on him to-morrow.

FIELDBO.

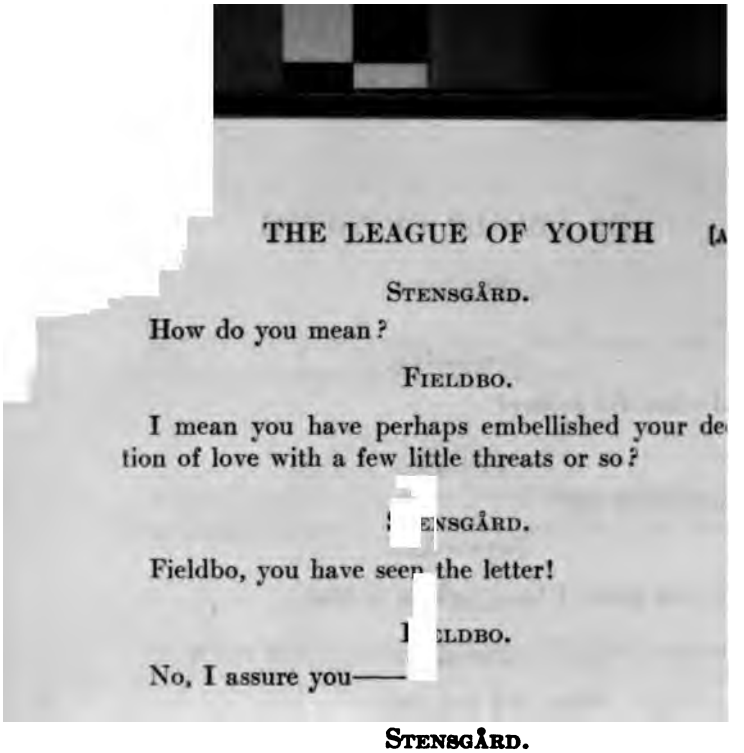
If I were you, I should at least defer my visit. It is the Chamberlain's birthday to-morrow; a crowd of people will be there——

STENSGÅRD.

That's all right; the more the better. I hold big cards in my hand, let me tell you.

FIELDBO.

And perhaps you have bluffed a little with your big cards?



STENSGÅRD.

How do you mean?

FIELDBO.

I mean you have perhaps embellished your de
tion of love with a few little threats or so?

ENSGÅRD.

Fieldbo, you have seen the letter!

LDBO.

No, I assure you——

STENSGÅRD.

Well then, frankly—I h a v e threatened him.

FIELDBO.

Ah! Then I have, in a way, an answer to your

STENSGÅRD.

An answer? Out with it, man!

FIELDBO.

[*Shows him a sealed paper.*] Look here—the C
berlain's proxy.

STENSGÅRD

And who does he vote for?

FIELDBO.

Not for you, at any rate.

STENSGÅRD.

For whom then? For whom?

FIELDBO.

For the Sheriff and the Provost.[1]

STENSGÅRD.

What! Not even for Lundestad?

FIELDBO.

No. And do you know why? Because Lundestad is going to propose you as his successor.

STENSGÅRD.

He dares to do this!

FIELDBO.

Yes, he does. And he added: "If you see Stensgård, you can tell him how I am voting; it will show him on what footing we stand."

STENSGÅRD.

Good; since he will have it so!

FIELDBO.

Take care; it's dangerous to tug at an old tower—it may come down on your head.

[1] "Amtmanden og provsten." The "Amtmand" is the chief magistrate of an "Amt" or county; the "Provst" is an ecclesiastical functionary, perhaps equivalent to a rural dean.

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, I have learnt wisdom in these two days.

FIELDBO.

Indeed? You're not so wise but that you let old Lundestad lead you by the nose.

STENSGÅRD.

Do you think I haven't seen through Lundestad? Do you think I don't understand that he took me up because he thought I had won over the Chamberlain, and because he wanted to break up our League and keep Monsen out?

FIELDBO.

But now that he knows you haven't won over the Chamberlain——

STENSGÅRD.

He has gone too far to draw back; and I've made good use of the time, and scattered announcements broadcast. Most of his supporters will abstain from voting; mine are all here——

FIELDBO.

It's a big stride from the preliminary election to the final election.

STENSGÅRD.

Lundestad knows very well that if he fails me in the College of Electors, I'll soon agitate him out of the Town Council.

FIELDBO.

Not a bad calculation. And to succeed in all this, you feel that you must strike root here more firmly than you have as yet done?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, these people always demand material guarantees, community of interests——

FIELDBO.

Just so; and therefore Miss Bratsberg is to be sacrificed?

STENSGÅRD.

Sacrificed? If that were so, I should be no better than a scoundrel. But it will be for her happiness, that I'm convinced. What now? Fieldbo, why do you look like that? You have some underhand scheme of your own——

FIELDBO.

I?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, you have! You are intriguing against me, behind my back. Why do you do that? Be open with me—will you?

FIELDBO.

Frankly, I won't. You are so dangerous, so unscrupulous—well, so reckless at any rate, that one dare not be open with you. Whatever you know, you make use of

without hesitation. But this I say to you as a friend: put Miss Bratsberg out of your head.

STENSGÅRD.

I cannot. I must extricate myself from these sordid surroundings. I can't go on living in this hugger-mugger way. Here have I got to be hail-fellow-well-met with Dick, Tom, and Harry; to whisper in corners with them, to hob-nob with them, to laugh at their beery witticisms; to be hand in [illegible]bbledehoys and unlicked cubs. How can [illegible]love of the People untarnished in the [illegible]? I feel as if all the electricity went o[illegible] I have no elbow-room, no fresh air to bre[illegible]onging comes over me at times for exquisite w[illegible]vant something that brings beauty with it! I li[illegible] sort of turbid eddy, while out there the clea[illegible] sweeps past me—— But what can y o u [illegible] all this!

LUNDESTAD.

[*Enters from the back.*] Ah, here we are. Good morning, gentlemen.

STENSGÅRD.

I have news for you, Mr. Lundestad! Do you know who the Chamberlain is voting for?

FIELDBO.

Silence! It's dishonourable of you.

STENSGÅRD.

What do I care? He is voting for the Sheriff and the Provost.

LUNDESTAD.

Oh, that was to be expected. You went and ruined your chances with him—though I implored you to play your cards neatly.

STENSGÅRD.

I shall play them neatly enough—in future.

FIELDBO.

Take care—two can play at that game.

[*Goes out to the right.*

STENSGÅRD.

That fellow has something up his sleeve. Have you any idea what it can be?

LUNDESTAD.

No, I haven't. But, by-the-bye, I see you are flourishing in the paper to-day.

STENSGÅRD.

I?

LUNDESTAD.

Yes, with a nice little epitaph on me.

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, that's that beast Aslaksen, of course——

LUNDESTAD.

Your attack on the Chamberlain is in too.

STENSGÅRD.

I don't know anything about that. If it's to be war between the Chamberlain and me, I have sharper weapons.

LUNDESTAD.

Indeed!

STENSGÅRD.

Have you ever seen this bill? Look at it. Is it good?

LUNDESTAD.

Good, you say? This bill here?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, look closely at it.

HEIRE.

[redacted]

STENSGÅRD.

Well, it's an occasion of great importance.

HEIRE.

Oh, you and your importance! No, it's something quite different, my dear friends. There are whispers of a great failure; a bankruptcy—oh, not political, Mr. Lundestad; I don't mean that!

STENSGÅRD.

A bankruptcy?

HEIRE.

Hee-hee! That puts life into our legal friend. Yes, a bankruptcy; some one is on his last legs; the axe is laid to the root of the tree—— I say no more! Two strange gentlemen have been seen driving past; but where to? To whose address? Do you know anything, Mr. Lundestad?

LUNDESTAD.

I know how to hold my tongue, Mr. Heire.

HEIRE.

Of course; you are a statesman, a diplomatist. But I must be off and find out all I can about it. It's such sport with these heroes of finance: they are like beads on a string—when one slips off, all the rest follow.

[*Goes out by the back.*

STENSGÅRD.

Is there any truth in all this gossip?

LUNDESTAD.

You showed me a bill; I thought I saw your Bratsberg's name upon it?

STENSGÅRD.

The Chamberlain's too.

LUNDESTAD.

And you asked me if it was good?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes; just look at it.

LUNDESTAD.

It's perhaps not so good as it might be.

STENSGÅRD.

You see it then?

LUNDESTAD.

What?

STENSGÅRD.

That it is a forgery.

LUNDESTAD.

A forgery? Forged bills are often the safest; redeem them first.

STENSGÅRD.

But what do you think? Isn't it a forgery?

LUNDESTAD.

I don't much like the look of it.

STENSGÅRD.

How so?

LUNDESTAD.

I'm afraid there are too many of these about, Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD.

What! It's not possible that——?

LUNDESTAD.

If young Mr. Bratsberg slips off the string, those nearest him are only too likely to follow.

STENSGÅRD.

[*Seizes his arm.*] What do you mean by those nearest him?

LUNDESTAD.

Who can be nearer than father and son?

STENSGÅRD.

Why, good God——!

LUNDESTAD.

Remember, I say nothing! It was Daniel Heire that was talking of failure and bankruptcy and——

STENSGÅRD.

This is a thunderbolt to me.

LUNDESTAD.

Oh, many a man that seemed solid enough has gone to the wall before now. Perhaps he's too good-natured; goes and backs bills; ready money isn't always to be had; property has to be sold for an old song——

STENSGÅRD.

And of course this falls on—falls on the children as well.

LUNDESTAD.

Yes, I'm heartily grieved for Miss Bratsberg. She didn't get much from her mother; and heaven knows if even the little she has is secured.

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, now I understand Fieldbo's advice! He's a true friend, after all.

LUNDESTAD.

That's not a very nice way to put it. But what's the matter with you? You look quite ill. Good God, I haven't gone and blasted your hopes, have I?

STENSGÅRD.

How do you mean?

LUNDESTAD.

Yes, yes—I see it all. Old fool that I am! My dear Mr. Stensgård, if you really love the girl, what does it matter whether she is rich or poor?

STENSGÅRD.

Matter? No, of course——

LUNDESTAD.

Good Lord, we all know happiness isn't a matter of money.

STENSGÅRD.

Of course not.

LUNDESTAD.

And with industry and determination you'll soon be on your feet again. Don't let poverty frighten you. I know what love is; I went into all that in my young days. A happy home; a faithful woman——! My dear young friend, beware how you take any step that may involve you in life-long self-reproach.

STENSGÅRD.

But what will become of your plans?

LUNDESTAD.

Oh, they must go as best they can. I couldn't think of demanding the sacrifice of your heart!

STENSGÅRD.

But I will make the sacrifice. Yes, I will show you that I have the strength for it. Think of the longing multitude out there: they claim me with a sort of voiceless pathos. I cannot, I dare not, fail them!

LUNDESTAD.

Yes, but the stake in the district——?

STENSGÅRD.

I shall take measures to fulfil the demands of my fellow citizens in that respect, Mr. Lundestad. I see a way, a new way; and I will follow it up. I renounce the happiness of toiling in obscurity for the woman I love. I say

STENSGÅRD.

Where have you come from?

BASTIAN.

From the Nation.

STENSGÅRD.

The Nation? What does that mean?

BASTIAN.

Don't you know what the Nation means? It means the People; the common People; those who have nothing, and are nothing; those who lie chained——

STENSGÅRD.

What monkey-tricks are these, I should like to know?

BASTIAN.

Monkey-tricks?

STENSGÅRD.

I have noticed lately that you go about mimicking me; you imitate even my clothes and my handwriting. Be kind enough to stop that

BASTIAN.

What do you mean? Don't we belong to the same party?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, but I won't put up with this—you make yourself ridiculous——

BASTIAN.

By being like you?

STENSGÅRD.

By aping me. Be sensible now, Monsen, and give it up. It's quite disgusting. But look here—can you tell me when your father is coming back?

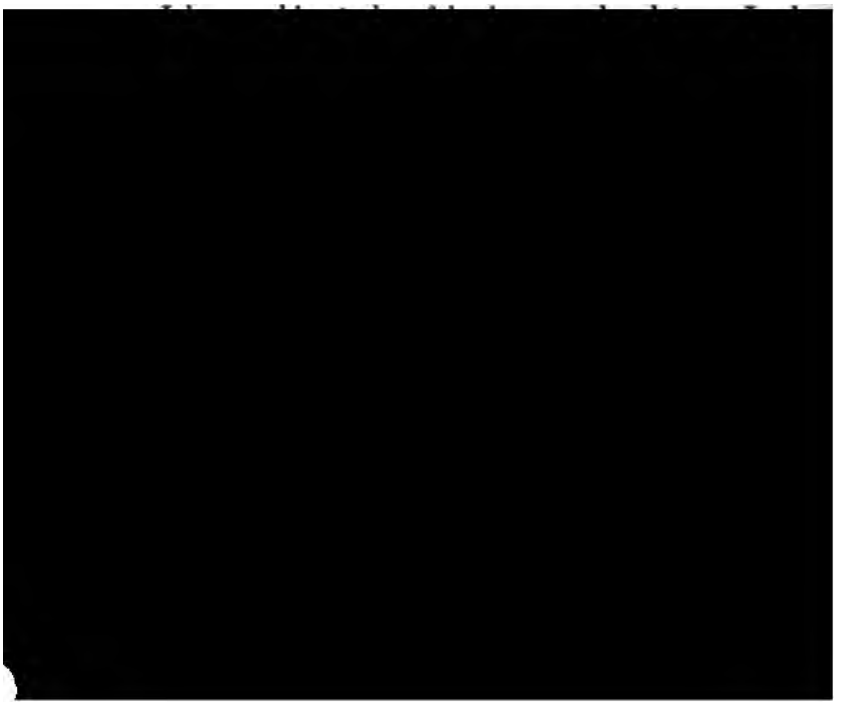
BASTIAN.

I have no idea. I believe he's gone to Christiania; he may not be back for a week or so.

STENSGÅRD.

Indeed? I'm sorry for that. He has a big stroke of business on hand, I hear.

BASTIAN.



BASTIAN.

Sh! Some one in this house.

STENSGÅRD.

Madam Rundholmen?

BASTIAN.

Sh! Yes, it's her. Put in a good word for me, do! This sort of thing is just the thing for me. She's in the swim, you know; she's on the best of terms with the Chamberlain's people, ever since her sister was housekeeper there. If I get her, perhaps I shall get the town-contracts too. So that on the whole—damn it, I love her!

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, love, love! Have done with that sickening hypocrisy.

BASTIAN.

Hypocrisy!

STENSGÅRD.

Yes; you are lying to yourself, at any rate. You talk in one breath of town-contracts and of love. Why not call a spade a spade? There's something sordid about all this; I will have nothing to do with it.

BASTIAN.

But listen——!

STENSGÅRD.

Do your dirty work yourself, I say! [*To* FIELDBO, *who enters from the right.*] Well, how goes the election?

FIELDBO.

Excellently for you, it appears. I saw Lundestad just now; he said you were getting all the votes.

STENSGÅRD.

Am I indeed?

FIELDBO.

But what good will they do you? Since you're not a man of property——

STENSGÅRD.

[*Between his teeth.*] Isn't it confounded!

FIELDBO.

Well, you can't do two things at once. If you win on the one side, you must be content to lose on the other. Good-bye! [*Goes out by the back.*

BASTIAN.

What did he mean by winning and losing?

STENSGÅRD.

I'll tell you afterwards. But now, my dear Monsen—to return to what we were talking about—I promised to put in a good word for you——

BASTIAN.

You promised? On the contrary, I thought you said——?

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, nonsense; you didn't let me explain myself fully. What I meant was that there is something sordid in mix-

ing up your love with town-contracts and so forth; it is an offence against all that is noblest in your nature. So, my dear friend, if you really love the girl——

BASTIAN.

The widow——

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, yes; it's all the same. I mean when one really loves a woman, that in itself should be a conclusive reason——

BASTIAN.

Yes, that's just what I think. So you'll speak for me, will you?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, with great pleasure—but on one condition.

BASTIAN.

What's that?

STENSGÅRD.

Tit for tat, my dear Bastian—you must put in a word for me too.

BASTIAN.

I? With whom?

STENSGÅRD.

Have you really not noticed anything? Yet it's before your very nose.

BASTIAN.

You surely don't mean——?

STENSGÅRD.

Your sister Ragna? Yes, it is she. Oh, you don't know how I have been moved by the sight of her quiet, self-sacrificing devotion to her home——

BASTIAN.

Do you really mean to say so?

STENSGÅRD.

And you, with your penetrating eye, have suspected nothing?

BASTIAN.

Yes, at one time I did think——; but now people are talking of your hanging about the Chamberlain's——

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, the Chamberlain's! Well, Monsen, I'll tell you

then she's apt to be snappish. You do your best, my dear fellow, and leave the rest to me. Do you happen to have seen Aslaksen?

STENSGÅRD.

He's probably at the polling-booth.

[BASTIAN *goes out by the back, as* MADAM RUNDHOLMEN *enters from the right.*

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Things are going as smooth as possible, Mr. Stensgård; every one is voting for you.

STENSGÅRD.

That's very odd.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Goodness knows what Monsen of Stonelee will say.

STENSGÅRD.

I want a word with you, Madam Rundholmen.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Well, what is it?

STENSGÅRD.

Will you listen to me?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Lord yes, that I will.

STENSGÅRD.

Well then: you were talking just now about being alone in the world——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Oh, it was that horrid old Heire——

STENSGÅRD.

You were saying how hard it is for an unprotected widow——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Yes, indeed; you should just try it, Mr. Stensgård!

STENSGÅRD.

But now if there came a fine young man——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

A fine young man?

STENSGÅRD.

One who had long loved you in secret——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Oh, come now, Mr. Stensgård, I won't hear any more of your nonsense.

STENSGÅRD.

You must! A young man who, like yourself, finds it hard to be alone in the world——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Well, what then? I don't understand you at all.

STENSGÅRD.

If you could make two people happy, Madam Rundholmen—yourself and——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

And a fine young man?

STENSGÅRD.

Just so; now, answer me——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Mr. Stensgård, you can't be in earnest?

STENSGÅRD.

You don't suppose I would jest on such a subject? Should you be disposed——?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Yes, that I am, the Lord knows! Oh, you dear, sweet——

STENSGÅRD.

[*Recoiling a step.*] What is this?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Bother, here comes some one!

RAGNA MONSEN *enters hastily, and in evident disquietude, from the back.*

RAGNA.

I beg your pardon—isn't my father here?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Your father? Yes; no;—I—I don't know—ex
me——

RAGNA.

Where is he?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Your father? Oh, he drove past here——

STENSGÅRD.

Towards Christiania.

RAGNA.

No; it's impossible——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Yes, I know for certain he drove down the road.
my dear Miss Monsen, you can't think how happy I
Wait a moment—I'll just run to the cellar, and fetc
a bottle of the real thing. [*Goes out to the*

STENSGÅRD.

Tell me, Miss Monsen—is it really your father yo
looking for?

RAGNA.

Yes, of course it is.

STENSGÅRD.

And you didn't know that he had gone away?

RAGNA.

Oh, how should I know? They tell me nothing. But to Christiania——? That's impossible; they would have met him. Good-bye!

STENSGÅRD.

[*Intercepts her.*] Ragna! Tell me! Why are you so changed towards me?

RAGNA.

I? Let me pass! Let me go!

STENSGÅRD.

No, you shall not go! I believe Providence guided you here at this moment. Oh, why do you shrink from me? You used not to.

RAGNA.

Ah, that is all over, thank God!

STENSGÅRD.

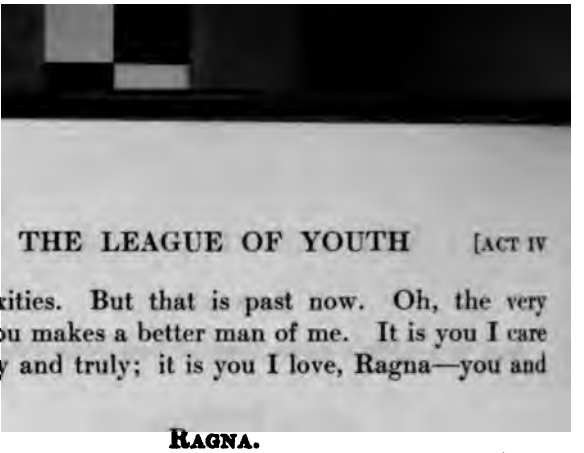
But why?

RAGNA.

I have learnt to know you better; it is well that I learned in time.

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, that is it? People have been lying about me? Perhaps I am to blame too; I have been lost in a maze



of perplexities. But that is past now. Oh, the very sight of you makes a better man of me. It is you I care for, deeply and truly; it is you I love, Ragna—you and no other!

RAGNA.

Let me pass! I am afraid of you——

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, but to-morrow, Ragna—may I come and speak to you to-morrow?

RAGNA.

Yes, yes, if you must; only for heaven's sake not to-day.

STENSGÅRD.

Only not to-day! Hurrah! I have won; now I am happy!

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

[*Enters from the left with cake and wine.*] Come now, we must drink a glass for luck.

STENSGÅRD.

For luck in love! Here's to love and happiness! Hurrah for to-morrow! [*He drinks.*

HELLE.

[*Entering from the right, to* RAGNA.] Have you found him?

RAGNA.

No, he is not here. Come, come!

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Heaven help us, what's the matter?

HELLE.

Nothing; only some visitors have arrived at Stonelee——

RAGNA.

Thanks for all your kindness, Madam Rundholmen——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Oh, have you got visitors on your hands again?

RAGNA.

Yes, yes; excuse me; I must go home. Good-bye!

STENSGÅRD.

Good-bye—till to-morrow!

[RAGNA *and* HELLE *go out by the back.*

DANIEL HEIRE *enters from the right.*

HEIRE.

Ha-ha! It's going like a house on fire! They're all cackling Stensgård, Stensgård, Stensgård! They're all plumping for you. Now you should plump for him too, Madam Rundholmen!

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Hey, that's an idea! Are they all voting for him?

HEIRE.

Unanimously—Mr. Stensgård enjoys the confidence of the constituency, as the saying is. Old Lundestad is going about with a face like a pickled cucumber. Oh it's a pleasure to see it all.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

They shan't regret having voted for him. If I can't vote, I can stand treat. *[Goes out to the left.*

HEIRE.

Ah, you are the man for the widows, Mr. Stensgård! I'll tell you what—if you can only get hold of her, you're a made man, sir!

STENSGÅRD.

Get hold of Madam Rundholmen?

HEIRE.

Yes, why not? She's a substantial woman in every sense of the word. She'll be mistress of the situation as soon as the Stonelee card-castle has come to grief.

STENSGÅRD.

There's nothing wrong at Stonelee, is there?

HEIRE.

Isn't there? You have a short memory, my dear sir. Didn't I tell you there were rumours of failure, and bankruptcy, and——?

STENSGÅRD.

Well, what then?

HEIRE.

What then? That's just what we want to know. There's a hue and cry after Monsen; two men have come to Stonelee——

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, I know—a couple of visitors——

HEIRE.

Uninvited visitors, my dear young friend; there are whispers of the police and infuriated creditors—there's something queer about the accounts, you must know! Talking of that—what paper was that Monsen gave you yesterday?

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, just a paper—— Something queer about the accounts, you say? Look here! you know Chamberlain Bratsberg's signature?

HEIRE.

Hee-hee! I should rather think I did.

STENSGÅRD.

[*Produces the bill.*] Well, look at this!

HEIRE.

Give it here—I'm rather short-sighted, you know. [*After examining it.*] That, my dear sir? That's not the Chamberlain's hand.

STENSGÅRD.

Not? Then it is——?

HEIRE.

And it's drawn by Monsen?

STENSGÅRD.

No, by young Mr. Bratsberg.

HEIRE.

Nonsense! Let me see. [*Looks at the paper and hands it back again.*] You can light your cigar with this.

STENSGÅRD.

What! The drawer's name too——?

HEIRE.

A forgery, young man; a forgery, as sure as my name's Daniel. You have only to look at it with the keen eye of suspicion——

STENSGÅRD.

But how can that be? Monsen can't have known——

HEIRE.

Monsen? No, he knows nothing about either his own paper or other people's. But I'm glad it has come to an end, Mr. Stensgård!—It's a satisfaction to one's moral sense. Ah, I have often glowed with a noble indignation, if I may say so, at having to stand by and see——

I say no more! But the best of it all is that now Monsen is down he'll drag young Bratsberg after him; and the son will bring the father down——

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, so Lundestad said.

HEIRE.

But of course there's method even in bankruptcy. You'll see; I am an old hand at prophecy. Monsen will go to prison; young Bratsberg will compound with his creditors; and the Chamberlain will be placed under trustees; that's to say, his creditors will present him with an annuity of a couple of thousand dollars. That's how things go, Mr. Stensgård; I know it, I know it! What says the classic? *Fiat justitia, pereat mundus;* which means: Fie on what's called justice in this wicked world, sir!

STENSGÅRD.

[*Pacing the room.*] One after the other! Both ways barred!

HEIRE.

What the deuce——?

STENSGÅRD.

And now too! Just at this moment!

ASLAKSEN.

[*Enters from the right.*] I congratulate you, chosen of the people!

STENSGÅRD.

Elected!

ASLAKSEN.

Elected by 117 votes, and Lundestad by 53. The rest all nowhere.

HEIRE.

Your first step on the path of glory, Mr. Stensgård.

ASLAKSEN.

And it shall cost you a bowl of punch——

HEIRE.

Well, it's the first step that costs, they say.

ASLAKSEN.

[*Goes off to the left, shouting.*] Punch, Madam Rundholmen! A bowl of punch! The chosen of the people stands treat!

LUNDESTAD, *and after him several* ELECTORS, *enter from the right.*

HEIRE.

[*In a tone of condolence to* LUNDESTAD.] Fifty-three! That's the grey-haired patriot's reward!

LUNDESTAD.

[*Whispers to* STENSGÅRD.] Are you firm in your resolve?

STENSGÅRD.

What's the use of being firm when everything is tumbling about your ears?

LUNDESTAD.

Do you think the game is lost?

ASLAKSEN.

[*Returning by the left.*] Madam Rundholmen stands treat herself. She says she has the best right to.

STENSGÅRD.

[*Struck by an idea.*] Madam Rundholmen—has the best right to——!

LUNDESTAD.

What?

STENSGÅRD.

The game is n o t lost, Mr. Lundestad!
[*Sits at the right-hand table and writes.*

LUNDESTAD.

[*In a low voice.*] Oh, Aslaksen—can you get something into your next paper for me?

ASLAKSEN.

Of course I can. Is it libellous?

LUNDESTAD.

No, certainly not!

ASLAKSEN.

Well, never mind; I'll take it all the same.

LUNDESTAD.

It is my political last will and testament; I shall write it to-night.

A [illegible]RVANT.

[*Enters from the left.*] [illegible]nch, with Madam Rundholmen's compliments.

ASLAKSEN.

Hurrah! Now there's some life in the local situation.

[*He places the punch-bowl on the middle table, serves the others, and drinks freely himself during the following scene.* BASTIAN MONSEN *has meanwhile entered from the right.*

BASTIAN.

[*Softly.*] You won't forget my letter?

ASLAKSEN.

Don't be afraid. [*Taps his breast pocket.*] I have it here.

BASTIAN.

You'll deliver it as soon as you can—when you see she's disengaged, you understand.

ASLAKSEN.

I understand. [*Calls.*] Come, now, the glasses are filled.

BASTIAN.

You shan't do it for nothing, I promise you.

ASLAKSEN.

All right, all right. [*To the servant.*] A lemon, Karen —quick as the wind! [BASTIAN *retires.*

STENSGÅRD.

A word, Aslaksen; shall you be passing here to-morrow evening?

ASLAKSEN.

To-morrow evening? I can, if you like.

STENSGÅRD.

Then you might look in and give Madam Rundholmen this letter.

ASLAKSEN.

From you?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes. Put it in your pocket. There now. To-morrow evening, then?

ASLAKSEN.

All right; trust to me.

[*The servant brings the lemon;* STENSGÅRD *goes towards the window.*

BASTIAN.

Well—have you spoken to Madam Rundholmen?

STENSGÅRD.

Spoken? Oh yes, I said a word or two——

BASTIAN.

And what do you think?

STENSGÅRD.

Oh—well—we were interrupted. I can't say anything definite.

N.

I'll take same; she's always complaining of fate shall be sealed within an hour.

RD.

Within an hour?

BASTIAN.

[*Sees* MADAM RUNDHOLMEN, *who enters from the left.*] Sh! Not a word to any one! [*Goes towards the back.*

STENSGÅRD.

[*Whispers to* ASLAKSEN.] Give me back the letter.

ASLAKSEN.

Do you want it back?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, at once; I shall deliver it myself.

ASLAKSEN.

Very well; here it is.

[STENSGÅRD *thrusts the letter into his pocket, and mixes with the rest.*

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

[*To* BASTIAN.] What do you say to the election, Mr. Bastian?

BASTIAN.

I'm delighted. Stensgård and I are bosom friends, you know. I shouldn't be surprised if he got into Parliament.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

But your father wouldn't much like that.

BASTIAN.

Oh, father has so many irons in the fire. Besides, if Stensgård's elected, it will still be all in the family, I daresay.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

How so?

BASTIAN.

He wants to marry——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Lord! Has he said anything?

BASTIAN.

Yes; and I've promised to put in a word for him. It'll be all right. I'm sure Ragna likes him.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Ragna!

LUNDESTAD.

[*Approaching.*] What is interesting you so deeply Madam Rundholmen?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

What do you think he says? Why, that Mr. Stensgård's making up to——

LUNDESTAD.

Yes, but he won't find the Chamberlain so easy to deal with.

BASTIAN.

The Chamberlain?

LUNDESTAD.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

You are quite sure of that?

BASTIAN.

And he told me——! Oh, I want to say a word to you!
[LUNDESTAD *and* BASTIAN *go towards the back.*

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

[*Approaching* STENSGÅRD.] You must be on your guard, Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD.

Against whom?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Against malicious people who are slandering you.

STENSGÅRD.

Why, let them—so long as o n e person doesn't believe their slanders.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

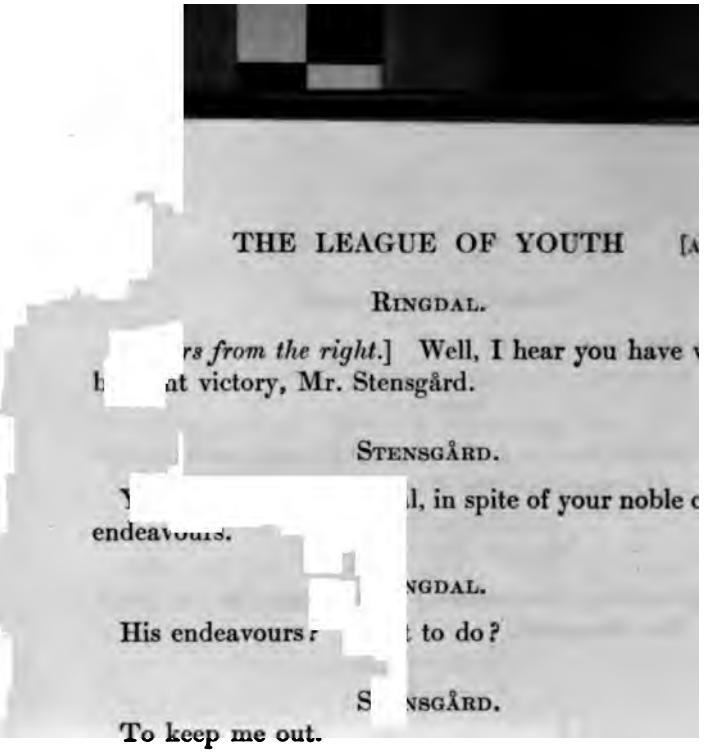
And who may that one person be?

STENSGÅRD.

[*Slips the letter into her hand.*] Take this; read it when you are alone.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Ah, I knew it! [*Goes off to the left.*



RINGDAL.

rs from the right.] Well, I hear you have
at victory, Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD.

l, in spite of your noble
endeavours.

NGDAL.

His endeavours
to do?

NSGÅRD.

To keep me out.

RINGDAL.

Like other people, he has a right to vote as he pl

STENSGÅRD.

It's a pity he is not likely to retain that right for

RINGDAL.

What do you mean?

STENSGÅRD.

I mean, since his affairs are not so straight as might be——

RINGDAL.

His affairs! What affairs? What have you go your head?

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, you needn't pretend ignorance. Isn't there a storm brewing?—a great crash impending?

RINGDAL.

Yes, so I hear on all sides.

STENSGÅRD.

And aren't both the Bratsbergs involved in it?

RINGDAL.

My dear sir, are you crazy?

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, you naturally want to keep it dark.

RINGDAL.

What good would that be? That sort of thing can't be kept dark.

STENSGÅRD.

Is it not true then?

RINGDAL.

Not a word of it, so far as the Chamberlain is concerned. How could you believe such nonsense? Who has been humbugging you?

STENSGÅRD.

I won't tell you just yet.

RINGDAL.

Well, you needn't; but whoever it was must have had a motive.

STENSGÅRD.

A motive——!

RINGDAL.

Yes, just think: is there no one who has an interest in keeping you and the Chamberlain apart?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, on my soul, but there is though!

RINGDAL.

The Chamberlain in reality thinks very highly of you——

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, nothing. But it's not too late! My dear Mr. Ringdal, shall you see the Chamberlain this evening?

RINGDAL.

In all probability.

STENSGÅRD.

Then tell him to think no more of those threats—he will understand; tell him I shall call to-morrow and explain everything.

RINGDAL.

You'll call?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, to prove to him—— Ah! a proof! Look here, Mr. Ringdal; will you give the Chamberlain this bill from me?

RINGDAL.

This bill——?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes; it's a matter I can't explain to you; but just you give it to him——

RINGDAL.

Upon my word, Mr. Stensgård——

STENSGÅRD.

And just add these words from me: This is how I treat those who vote against me!

RINGDAL. [*Goes out at the back.*

. shan't forget.

STENSGÅRD.

I say, Mr. Heire—how could you go and palm off that story about the Chamberlain upon me?

HEIRE.

How could I palm it off on you——?

STENSGÅRD.

Yes—it's a lie from beginning to end.

HEIRE.

No! Is it indeed? I'm delighted to hear it. Do you hear, Mr. Lundestad? It's all a lie about the Chamberlain.

LUNDESTAD.

Sh! We were on a false scent; it's nearer at hand.

STENSGÅRD.

HEIRE.

Haven't I prophesied it! She has been too much mixed up with our friend at Stonelee——

LUNDESTAD.

He drove off this morning before daylight——

HEIRE.

And his family is out hunting for him——

LUNDESTAD.

And the son has been doing all he knows to get his sister provided for——

STENSGÅRD.

Provided for! "To-morrow" she said; and then her anxiety about her father——!

HEIRE.

Hee-hee! You'll see he's gone and hanged himself, sir!

ASLAKSEN.

Has any one hanged himself?

LUNDESTAD.

Mr. Heire says Monsen of Stonelee——

MONSEN.

[*Enters from the back.*] A dozen of champagne!

ASLAKSEN AND OTHERS.

Monsen!

MONSEN.

Yes, Monsen! Champagne-Monsen! Money-Monsen! Let's have the wine, confound it all!

HEIRE.

But, my dear sir——

STENSGÅRD.

Why, where have you dropped from?

MONSEN.

I've been doing a stroke of business, sir! Cleared a hundred thousand! Hei! To-morrow I'll give a thundering dinner at Stonelee. I invite you all. Champagne, I say! I congratulate you, Stensgård! I hear you're elected.

STENSGÅRD.

Yes; I must explain to you——

MONSEN.

Pooh; what does it matter to me? Wine, I say! Where is Madam Rundholmen?

[*Makes a motion to go out to the left.*

THE MAID-SERVANT.

[*Who has just entered, intercepts him.*] No one can see the mistress just now; she's got a letter——

BASTIAN.

Oh, damn it all! [*Goes out by the back.*

STENSGÅRD.

Is she reading it?

SERVANT.

Yes; and it seems quite to have upset her.

STENSGÅRD.

Good-bye, Mr. Monsen; dinner at Stonelee to-morrow——?

MONSEN.

Yes, to-morrow. Good-bye!

STENSGÅRD.

[*Whispers.*] Mr. Heire, will you do me a service?

HEIRE.

Certainly, certainly.

STENSGÅRD.

Then just run me down a little to Madam Rundholmen; indulge in an innuendo or two at my expense. You are so good at that sort of thing.

HEIRE.

What the deuce is the meaning of this?

STENSGÅRD.

I have my reasons. It's a joke, you know—a wager with—with some one you have a grudge against.

HEIBE.

Aha, I understand. I say no more!

STENSGÅRD.

Don't go too far, you know. Just place me in a more or less equivocal light—make her a little suspicious of me, for the moment.

HEIBE.

Rely upon me; it real pleasure to me.

RD.

Thanks, than [*Goes towards the table.*]
Mr. Lundestad, we to-morrow forenoon at the Chamberlain's.

LUNDES AD.

Have you hopes?

STENSGÅRD.

A threefold hope.

LUNDESTAD.

Threefold? I don't understand——

STENSGÅRD.

You needn't. Henceforth I will be my own counsellor. [*Goes out by the back.*

MONSEN.

[*At the punch-bowl.*] Another glass, Aslaksen! Where's Bastian?

ASLAKSEN.

He's just gone out. But I have a letter to deliver for him.

MONSEN.

Have you?

ASLAKSEN.

To Madam Rundholmen.

MONSEN.

Ah, at last!

ASLAKSEN.

But not till to-morrow evening, he said; to-morrow evening, neither sooner nor later. Here's to you!

HEIRE.

[*To* LUNDESTAD.] What the deuce is all this business between Stensgård and Madam Rundholmen?

LUNDESTAD.

[*Whispers.*] He's courting her.

HEIRE.

I suspected as much! But he asked me to run him down a bit—to cast a slur on his character——

LUNDESTAD.

And you said you would?

HEIRE.

Yes, of course.

LUNDESTAD.

I believe he says of you that your word is as good as your bond—and no better.

HEIRE.

Hee-hee— He shall find out his mistake this .

MADAM DHOLMEN.

[*With an open letter in her hand, at the door on the left.*] Where is Mr. Stensgård?

HEIRE.

He kissed your chambermaid and went, Madam Rundholmen!

ACT FIFTH

Large reception-room at the CHAMBERLAIN'S. *Entrance door at the back. Doors right and left.*

RINGDAL *stands at a table looking through some papers. A knock.*

RINGDAL.

Come in.

FIELDBO.

[*From the back.*] Good morning.

RINGDAL.

Good morning, Doctor.

FIELDBO.

All well, eh?

RINGDAL.

Oh, yes, well enough; but——

FIELDBO.

What?

RINGDAL.

Of course you've heard the great news?

FIELDBO.

No. What is it?

RINGDAL.

Do you mean to say you haven't heard what ha
pened at Stonelee.

FIELDBO.

No.

RINGDAL.

Monsen has absconded.

FIELDBO.

Absconded! Monsen?

RINGDAL.

Absconded.

FIELDBO.

Great heavens——!

RINGDAL.

There were ugly rumours yesterday; but then M
turned up again; he managed to throw dust in p
eyes——

FIELDBO.

But the reason? The reason?

RINGDAL.

Enormous losses in timber, they say. Several l
in Christiania have stopped payment, and so——

FIELDBO.

And so he has gone off!

RINGDAL.

To Sweden, probably. The authorities took possession at Stonelee this morning. Things are being inventoried and sealed up——

FIELDBO.

And the unfortunate children——?

RINGDAL.

The son seems to have kept clear of the business; at least I hear he puts a bold face on it.

FIELDBO.

But the daughter?

RINGDAL.

Sh! The daughter is here.

FIELDBO.

Here?

RINGDAL.

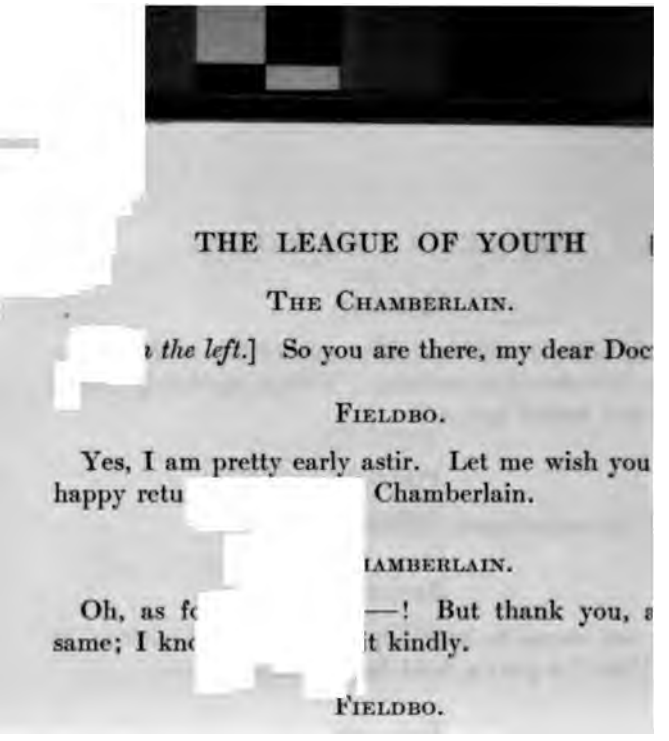
The tutor brought her and the two little ones here this morning. Miss Bratsberg is looking after them, quietly you know.

FIELDBO.

And how does she bear it?

RINGDAL.

Oh, pretty well, I fancy. You may guess, after the treatment she has met with at home—— And, besides, I may tell you she is—— Ah, here's the Chamberlain.



THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

the left.] So you are there, my dear Doc

FIELDBO.

Yes, I am pretty early astir. Let me wish you
happy retu Chamberlain.

IAMBERLAIN.

Oh, as fc —! But thank you, a
same; I kn it kindly.

FIELDBO.

And may I ask, Chamberlain——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

One word: be good enough to drop that title.

FIELDBO.

What do you mean?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I am an ironmaster, and nothing more.

FIELDBO.

Why, what strange notion is this?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I have renounced my post and my title. I am se
in my resignation to-day.

FIELDBO.

You should sleep upon that.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

When his Majesty was graciously pleased to assign me a place in his immediate circle, he did so because of the unblemished honour of my family through long generations.

FIELDBO.

Well, what then?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

My family is disgraced, just as much as Mr. Monsen's. Of course you have heard about Monsen?

FIELDBO.

Yes, I have.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*To* RINGDAL.] Any further news about him?

RINGDAL.

Only that he brings down with him a good many of the younger men.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

And my son?

RINGDAL.

Your son has sent me his balance-sheet. He will be able to pay in full; but there will be nothing over.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

H'm. Then will you get my resignation copied?

RINGDAL.

I'll see to it.

[*Goes out by the foremost door on the rig*

FIELDBO.

Have you reflected what you are doing? Things c
be arranged without any one being a bit the wiser.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Indeed! Can I make myself ignorant of what h
happened?

FIELDBO.

Oh, after all, what has happened? Has not
written to you, acknowledged his fault, and begged
your forgiveness? This is the only time he has do
anything of the sort; why not simply blot it out?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Would you do what my son has done?

FIELDBO.

He won't repeat it; that is the main point.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

How do you know he will not repeat it?

FIELDBO.

If for no other reason, because of what you yourself told me—the scene with your daughter-in-law. Whatever else comes of it, that will steady him.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Pacing the room.*] My poor Selma! Our peace and happiness gone!

FIELDBO.

There are higher things than peace and happiness. Your happiness has been an illusion. Yes, I must speak frankly to you: in that, as in many other things, you have built on a hollow foundation. You have been short-sighted and overweening, Chamberlain!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Stops short.*] I?

FIELDBO.

Yes, you! You have plumed yourself on your family honour; but when has that honour been tried? Are you sure it would have stood the test?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

You can spare your sermons, Doctor. Do you think I have not learnt a lesson from the events of these days?

FIELDBO.

I daresay you have; but prove it, by showing greater tolerance and clearer insight. You reproach your son; but what have you done for him? You have taken care

to develop his faculties, but not to form his character. You have lectured him on what he owed to the honour of his family; but you have not guided and moulded him so that honour became to him an irresistible instinct.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Do you think so?

FIELDBO.

I not only think, I know it. But that is generally the way here: people are bent on learning, not on living. And you see what comes of it; you see hundreds of men with great gifts, who never seem to be more than half ripe; who are one thing in their ideas and feelings, and something quite different in their habits and acts. Just look at Stensgård——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Ah, Stensgård now! What do you make of Stensgård?

FIELDBO.

A patchwork. I have known him from childhood. His father was a mere rag of a man, a withered weed, a nobody. He kept a little huckster's shop, and eked things out with pawnbroking; or rather his wife did for him. She was a coarse-grained woman, the most unwomanly I ever knew. She had her husband declared incapable;[1] she had not an ounce of heart in her. And in that home Stensgård passed his childhood. Then he went to the grammar-school. "He shall go to college," said his mother; "I'll make a smart solicitor of him."

[1] "Gjort umyndig" = placed under a legal interdict.

Squalor at home, high-pressure at school; soul, temperament, will, talents, all pulling in different ways—what could it lead to but disintegration of character?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What could it lead to, eh? I should like to know what is good enough for you? We are to expect nothing of Stensgård; nothing of my son; but we may look to you, I suppose—to you——?

FIELDBO.

Yes, to me—precisely. Oh, you needn't laugh; I take no credit to myself; but my lot has been one that begets equilibrium and firmness of character. I was brought up amid the peace and harmony of a modest middle-class home. My mother is a woman of the finest type; in our home we had no desires that outstripped our opportunities, no cravings that were wrecked on the rocks of circumstance; and death did not break in upon our circle, leaving emptiness and longing behind it. We were brought up in the love of beauty, but it informed our whole view of life, instead of being a side-interest, a thing apart. We were taught to shun excesses, whether of the intellect or of the feelings——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Bless me! So that accounts for your being the pink of perfection?

FIELDBO.

I am far from thinking so. I only say that fate has been infinitely kind to me, and that I regard its favours in the light of obligations.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Very well; but if Stensgård is under no such obligations, it is all the more to his credit that he——

FIELDBO.

What? What is to his credit?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

You have misjudged him, my good Doctor. Look here. What do you say to this?

FIELDBO.

Your son's bill!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes; he has sent it to me.

FIELDBO.

Of his own accord?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Of his own accord, and unconditionally. It is fine; it is noble. From this day forth, my house is open to him.

FIELDBO.

Think again! For your own sake, for your daughter's——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, let me alone! He is better than you in many ways. At any rate he is straightforward, while you are underhand in your dealings.

FIELDBO.

I?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, you! You have made yourself the master of this house; you come and go as you please; I consult you about everything—and yet——

FIELDBO.

Well?—And yet?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

And yet there's always something confoundedly close about you; yes, and something—something uppish that I cannot endure!

FIELDBO.

Please explain yourself!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I? No, it is you that ought to explain yourself! But now you must take the consequences.

FIELDBO.

We don't understand each other, Chamberlain. I have no bill to give up to you; yet, who knows but I may be making a greater sacrifice for your sake?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Indeed! How so?

FIELDBO.

By holding my tongue.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Holding your tongue, indeed! Shall I tell you what I am tempted to do? To forget my manners, use bad language, and join the League of Youth. You are a stiff-necked Pharisee, my good Doctor; and that sort of thing is out of place in our free society. Look at Stensgård; he is not like that; so he shall come here whenever he likes; he shall—he shall——! Oh, what's the use of talking——! You must take the consequences; as you make your bed, so you must lie.

LUNDESTAD.

[*Enters from the back.*] My congratulations, Chamberlain! May you long enjoy the respect and——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, go to the devil—I'm almost inclined to say! That's all humbug, my dear Lundestad. There's nothing but humbug in this world.

LUNDESTAD.

That is what Mr. Monsen's creditors are saying.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Ah, about Monsen—didn't it come upon you like a thunderbolt?

LUNDESTAD.

Oh, you have often prophesied it, Chamberlain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

H'm, h'm;—yes, to be sure I have. I prophesied it only the day before yesterday; he came here trying to get money out of me——

FIELDBO.

It might have saved him.

LUNDESTAD.

Impossible; he was too deep in the mire; and whatever is, is for the best.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

That is your opinion? Was it for the best, then, that you were beaten at the poll yesterday?

LUNDESTAD.

I wasn't beaten; everything went just as I wanted. Stensgård is not a man to make an enemy of; he has got what we others have to whistle for.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I don't quite understand what you mean——?

LUNDESTAD.

He has the power of carrying people away with him. And then he has the luck to be unhampered by either character, or conviction, or social position; so that Liberalism is the easiest thing in the world to him.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Well, really, I should have thought we were all Liberals.

LUNDESTAD.

Yes, of course we are Liberals, Chamberlain; not a doubt of it. But the thing is that we are Liberal only on our own behalf, whereas Stensgård's Liberalism extends to other people. That's the novelty of the thing.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

And you are going over to these subversive ideas?

LUNDESTAD.

I've read in old story-books about people who could summon up spirits, but could not lay them again.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Why, my dear Lundestad, how can a man of your enlightenment——?

LUNDESTAD.

I know it's mere popish superstition, Chamberlain. But new ideas are like those spirits: it's not so easy to lay them; the best plan is to compromise with them as best you can.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

But now that Monsen has fallen, and no doubt his crew of agitators with him——

LUNDESTAD.

If Monsen's fall had come two or three days ago, things would have been very different.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, unfortunately. You have been too hasty.

LUNDESTAD.

Partly out of consideration for you, Chamberlain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

For me?

LUNDESTAD.

Our party must keep up its reputation in the eyes of the people. We represent the old, deep-rooted Norse sense of honour. If I had deserted Stensgård, you know he holds a paper——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Not now.

LUNDESTAD.

What?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Here it is.

LUNDESTAD.

He has given it up to you?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes. Personally, he is a gentleman; so much I must say for him.

LUNDESTAD.

[*Thoughtfully.*] Mr. Stensgård has rare abilities.

STENSGÅRD.

[*At the back, standing in the doorway.*] May I come i

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Going to meet him.*] I am delighted to see you.

STENSGÅRD.

And you will accept my congratulations?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

With all my heart.

STENSGÅRD.

Then with all my heart I wish you happiness! A you must forget all the stupid things I have written.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I go by deeds, not words, Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD.

How good of you to say so!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

And henceforth—since you wish it—you must consid yourself at home here.

STENSGÅRD.

May I? May I really? [*A knock at the do*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Come in.

Several LEADING MEN *of the neighbourhood*, TOWN COUNCILLORS, etc., *enter*. THE CHAMBERLAIN *goes to receive them, accepts their congratulations, and converses with them.*

THORA.

[*Who has meantime entered by the second door on the left.*] Mr. Stensgård, let me thank you.

STENSGÅRD.

You, Miss Bratsberg!

THORA.

My father has told me how nobly you have acted.

STENSGÅRD.

But——?

THORA.

Oh, how we have misjudged you!

STENSGÅRD.

Have you——?

THORA.

It was your own fault—— No, no; it was ours. Oh, what would I not do to atone for our error.

STENSGÅRD.

Would you? You yourself? Would you really——?

THORA.

All of us would; if we only knew——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Refreshments for these gentlemen, my child.

THORA.

They are just coming.

[*She retires towards the door again, where a* SERVANT *at the same moment appears with cake and wine, which are handed round.*

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, my dear Lundestad! I feel like a conquering god.

LUNDESTAD.

So you must have felt yesterday, I suppose.

STENSGÅRD.

Pooh! This is something quite different; the final triumph; the crown of all! There is a glory, a halo, over my life.

LUNDESTAD.

Oho; dreams of love!

STENSGÅRD.

Not dreams! Realities, glorious realities!

LUNDESTAD.

So brother Bastian has brought you the answer?

STENSGÅRD.

Bastian——?

LUNDESTAD.

Yes, he gave me a hint yesterday; he had promised to plead your cause with a certain young lady.

STENSGÅRD.

Oh, what nonsense——

LUNDESTAD.

Why make a mystery of it? If you haven't heard already, I can give you the news. You have won the day, Mr. Stensgård; I have it from Ringdal.

STENSGÅRD.

What have you from Ringdal?

LUNDESTAD.

Miss Monsen has accepted you.

STENSGÅRD.

What?

LUNDESTAD.

Accepted you, I say.

STENSGÅRD.

Accepted me! And the father has bolted!

LUNDESTAD.

But the daughter hasn't.

STENSGÅRD.

Accepted me! In the midst of all this family trouble! How unwomanly! How repellent to any man with the least delicacy of feeling! But the whole thing is a misunderstanding. I never commissioned Bastian—— How could that idiot——? However, it doesn't matter to me; he must answer for his follies himself.

DANIEL HEIRE.

[*Enters from the back.*] Hee-hee! Quite a gathering! Of course, of course! We are paying our respects, propitiating the powers that be, as the saying goes. May I, too——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Thanks, thanks, old friend!

HEIRE.

Oh, I protest, my dear sir? That is too much condescension. [*New* GUESTS *arrive.*] Ah, here we have the myrmidons of justice—the executive—— I say no more. [*Goes over to* STENSGÅRD.] Ah, my dear fortunate youth, are you there? Your hand! Accept the assurance of an old man's unfeigned rejoicing.

STENSGÅRD.

At what?

HEIRE.

You asked me yesterday to run you down a little to her —you know——

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, yes; what then?

HEIRE.

It was a heartfelt pleasure to me to oblige you——

STENSGÅRD.

Well—and what happened then? How did she take it?

HEIRE.

Like a loving woman, of course—burst into tears; locked herself into her room; would neither answer nor show herself——

STENSGÅRD.

Ah, thank goodness!

HEIRE.

It's barbarous to subject a widow's heart to such cruel tests, to go and gloat over her jealous agonies! But love has cat's eyes—— I say no more! For to-day, as I drove past, there stood Madam Rundholmen, brisk and buxom, at her open window, combing her hair. She looked like a mermaid, if you'll allow me to say so. Oh, she's a fine woman!

STENSGÅRD.

Well, and then?

HEIRE.

Why, she laughed like one possessed, sir, and waved a letter in the air, and called out "A proposal, Mr. Heire! I'm engaged to be married."

STENSGÅRD.

What! Engaged?

HEIRE.

My hearty congratulations, young man; I'm inexpressibly pleased to be the first to announce to you——

STENSGÅRD.

It's all rubbish! It's nonsense!

HEIRE.

What is nonsense?

STENSGÅRD.

You have misunderstood her; or else she has misunderstood—— Engaged! Preposterous! Now that Monsen's down, she'll probably——

STENSGÅRD.

Yes, yes; mum's the word. You sha'n't regret it—I'll take up your cases—— Sh! I rely upon you.

[*He retires.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Who has meanwhile been talking to* LUNDESTAD.] No, Lundestad—t h a t I really cannot believe!

LUNDESTAD.

I assure you, Chamberlain—Daniel Heire told me so himself.

HEIRE.

What did I tell you, may I inquire?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Did Mr. Stensgård show you a bill yesterday?

HEIRE.

Yes, by-the-bye——! What on earth was the meaning of all that?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I'll tell you afterwards. And you told him——

LUNDESTAD.

You persuaded him it was a forgery?

HEIRE.

Pooh, a mere innocent jest, to bewilder him a little in the hour of triumph.

LUNDESTAD.

And you told him both signatures were forged?

HEIRE.

Oh yes; why not both while I was about it?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

So that was it!

LUNDESTAD.

[*To the* CHAMBERLAIN.] And when he heard that—

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

He gave the bill to Ringdal!

LUNDESTAD.

The bill that was useless as a weapon of offence.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

He shams magnanimity! Makes a fool of me a seco time! Gains admission to my house, and makes welcome him and thank him—this—this——! And t is the fellow——

HEIRE.

Why, what are you going on about, my dear sir!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I'll tell you all about it afterwards. [*Takes* LU DESTAD *apart.*] And this is the fellow you protect, pu forward, help to rise!

LUNDESTAD.

Well, he took you in, too!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, I should like to——!

LUNDESTAD.

[*Pointing to* STENSGÅRD, *who is speaking to* THORA.] Look there! What will people be fancying!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I shall soon put a stop to these fancies.

LUNDESTAD.

Too late, Chamberlain; he'll worm himself forward by dint of promises and general plausibility——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I, too, can manœuvre, Mr. Lundestad.

LUNDESTAD.

What will you do?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Just watch. [*Goes over to* FIELDBO.] Doctor Fieldbo, will you do me a service?

FIELDBO.

With pleasure.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Then turn that fellow out of my house.

FIELDBO.

Stensgård?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, the adventurer; I hate his very name; turn h
out'

FIELDBO.

But how can I——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

That is your affair; I give you a free hand.

FIELDBO.

A free hand! Do you mean it? Entirely free?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, yes, by all means.

FIELDBO.

Your hand on it, Chamberlain!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Here it is.

FIELDBO.

So be it, then; now or never! [*Loudly.*] May I
quest the attention of the company for a moment?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Silence for Doctor Fieldbo!

FIELDBO.

With Chamberlain Bratsberg's consent, I have the pleasure of announcing my engagement to his daughter.

[*An outburst of astonishment.* THORA *utters a slight scream.* THE CHAMBERLAIN *is on the point of speaking, but refrains. Loud talk and congratulations.*

STENSGÅRD.

Engagement! Your engagement——

HEIRE.

With the Chamberlain's——? With your—— What does it mean?

LUNDESTAD.

Is the Doctor out of his mind?

STENSGÅRD.

But, Chamberlain——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What can I do? I am a Liberal. I join the League of Youth!

FIELDBO.

Thanks, thanks—and forgive me!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Associations are the order of the day, Mr. Stensgård. There is nothing like free competition!

THORA.

Oh, my dear father!

LUNDESTAD.

Yes, and engagements are the order of the day. I have another to announce.

STENSGÅRD.

A mere invention!

LUNDESTAD.

No, not a bit of it; Miss Monsen is engaged to——

STENSGÅRD.

False, false, I say!

THORA.

No, father, it's true; they are both here.

RAGNA.

[*Shrinking back shyly.*] Oh, no, no; there are so many people.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Don't be bashful; you couldn't help what has happened.

HELLE.

She is homeless now, Chamberlain.

RAGNA.

Oh, you must help us!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I will, indeed; and thank you for giving me the opportunity.

HEIRE.

You may well say engagements are the order of the day. I have one to add to the list.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What? You? At your age?—How rash of you!

HEIRE.

Oh—! I say no more.

LUNDESTAD.

The game is up, Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD.

Indeed? [*Loudly.*] *I* have one to add to the list, Mr. Heire! An announcement, gentlemen: I too have cast anchor for life.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What?

STENSGÅRD.

One is now and then forced to play a double game, to conceal one's true intentions. I regard this as permissible when the general weal is at stake. My life-work lies clear before me, and is all in all to me. I consecrate my whole energies to this district; I find here a ferment of ideas which I must strive to clarify. But this task cannot be accomplished by a mere adventurer. The men of the district must gather round one of themselves. Therefore I have determined to unite my interests indissolubly with yours—to unite them by a bond of affection. If I have awakened any false hopes, I must plead for forgiveness. I too am engaged.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

You?

FIELDBO.

Engaged?

HEIRE.

I can bear witness.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

But how——?

FIELDBO.

Engaged? To whom?

LUNDESTAD.

It surely can't be——?

STENSGÅRD.

It is a union both of the heart and of the understanding. Yes, my fellow citizens, I am engaged to Madam Rundholmen.

FIELDBO.

To Madam Rundholmen!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

The storekeeper's widow!

LUNDESTAD.

H'm. Indeed!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Why, my head's going round! How could you——?

STENSGÅRD.

A manœuvre, Mr. Bratsberg!

LUNDESTAD.

He has rare abilities!

ASLAKSEN.

[*Looks in at the door, back.*] I humbly beg pardon——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, come in, Aslaksen! A visit of congratulation, eh?

ASLAKSEN.

Oh, not at all; I wouldn't presume—— But I have something very important to say to Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD.

Another time; you can wait outside.

ASLAKSEN.

No, confound it; I must tell you——

STENSGÅRD.

Hold your tongue! What intrusiveness is this?—Yes, gentlemen, strange are the ways of destiny. The district and I required a bond that should bind us firmly together; and I found on my path a woman of ripened character who could make a home for me. I have put off the adventurer, gentlemen, and here I stand in your

THE COMPANY.

Madam Rundholmen?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

What about her?

THE SERVANT.

Madam Rundholmen is waiting outside with her young man——

THE COMPANY.

[*To each other.*] Her young man? Madam Rundholmen! How's this?

STENSGÅRD.

What nonsense!

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, I was just telling you——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*At the door.*] Come along, come along!

BASTIAN MONSEN, *with* MADAM RUNDHOLMEN *on his arm, enters from the back. A general movement.*

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

I hope I'm not intruding, sir——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Not at all, not at all.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

But I couldn't resist bringing up my young man to show him to you and Miss Bratsberg.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, I hear you are engaged; but——

THORA.

We didn't know——

STENSGÅRD.

[*To* ASLAKSEN.] How is all this——?

ASLAKSEN.

I had so much in my head yesterday; so much to think about, I mean——

STENSGÅRD.

But I gave her my letter, and——

ASLAKSEN.

No, you gave her Bastian Monsen's; here is yours.

STENSGÅRD.

Bastian's? And here——? [*Glances at the address, crumples the letter together, and crams it into his pocket.*] Oh, curse you for a blunderer!

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Of course I was willing enough. There's no trusting the men-folk, I know; but when you have it in black and

white that their intentions are honourable—— Why, there's Mr. Stensgård, I declare. Well, Mr. Stensgård, won't you congratulate me?

HEIRE.

[*To* LUNDESTAD.] How hungrily she glares at him.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Of course he will, Madam Rundholmen; but won't you congratulate your sister-in-law to be?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Who?

THORA.

Ragna; she is engaged too.

BASTIAN.

Are you, Ragna?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

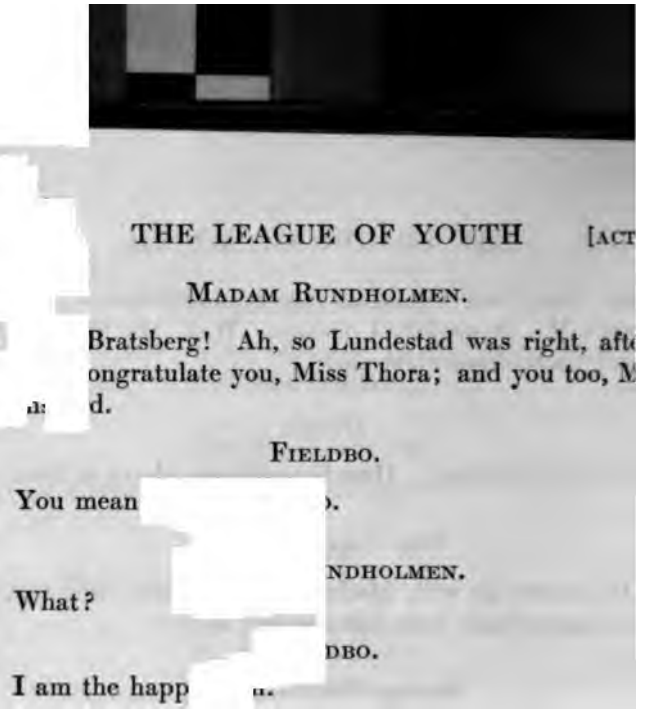
Indeed? Yes, Bastian told me there was something in the wind. I wish you both joy; and welcome into the family, Mr. Stensgård!

FIELDBO.

No, no; not Stensgård!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

No, it's Mr. Helle; an excellent choice. And, by-the-bye, you may congratulate my daughter too.


THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH [ACT

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Bratsberg! Ah, so Lundestad was right, aft
ongratulate you, Miss Thora; and you too, M
d.

FIELDBO.

You mean).

NDHOLMEN.

What?

DBO.

I am the happ .

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

Well, now, I don't in the least know where I am.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

And we have just found out where we are.

STENSGÅRD.

Excuse me; I have an appointment——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Aside.*] Lundestad, what was the other word?

LUNDESTAD.

What other?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Not adventurer, but the other——?

LUNDESTAD.

Demagogue.

STENSGÅRD.

I take my leave.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

One word—only one word, Mr. Stensgård—a word which has long been on the tip of my tongue.

STENSGÅRD.

[*At the door.*] Excuse me; I'm in a hurry.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Following him.*] Demagogue!

STENSGÅRD.

Good-bye; good-bye! [*Goes out by the back.*

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Coming forward again.*] Now the air is pure again, my friends.

BASTIAN.

I hope you don't blame me, sir, for what has happened at home?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Every one must bear his own burden.

BASTIAN.

I had really no part in it.

SELMA.

[*Who, during the preceding scene, has been listening at the second door on the right.*] Father! Now you are happy;—may he come now?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Selma! You! You plead for him? After what happened two days ago——

SELMA.

Oh, two days are a long time. All is well now. I know now that he can go astray——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

And that pleases you?

SELMA.

Yes, that he c a n; but in future I won't let him.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Bring him in then.

[SELMA *goes out again to the right.*

RINGDAL.

[*Enters by the foremost door on the right.*] Here is your resignation.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Thanks; but you can tear it up.

RINGDAL.

Tear it up?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, Ringdal; I have found another way. I can make atonement without that; I shall set to work in earnest——

ERIK.

[*Enters with* SELMA *from the right.*] Can you forgive me?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Hands him the bill.*] I cannot be less merciful than fate.

ERIK.

Father! I shall retire this very day from the business you dislike so much.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

No, indeed; you must stick to it. No cowardice! No running away from temptation! But I will stand at your side. [*Loudly.*] News for you, gentlemen! I have entered into partnership with my son.

SEVERAL GENTLEMEN.

What? You, Chamberlain?

HEIRE.

You, my dear sir?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes; it is a useful and honourable calling; or at any rate it can be made so. And now I have no reason to hold aloof any longer.

LUNDESTAD.

'll tell you what, Chamberlain—since you are
et to work for the good of the district, it would
e and disgrace if an old soldier like me were to
su... in his tent.

Ah, wha

AD.

I can disappointments in love
that have rd to-day, Heaven forbid
we should f e w into the political mill.
He must rest and ge of air is what he wants,
and I shall see that he gets it. So if my constituents
want me, why, they can have me.

THE GENTLEMEN.

[*Shaking hands with him enthusiastically.*] Thanks, Lundestad! That's a good fellow! You won't fail us?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Now, this is as it should be; things are settling down again. But whom have we to thank for all this?

FIELDBO.

Come, Aslaksen, you can explain——?

ASLAKSEN.

[*Alarmed.*] I, Doctor? I'm as innocent as the babe unborn!

FIELDBO.

What about that letter, then——?

ASLAKSEN.

It wasn't my fault, I tell you! It was the election and Bastian Monsen, and chance, and destiny, and Madam Rundholmen's punch—there was no lemon in it—and there was I, with the whole responsibility of the press upon me——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Approaching.*] What? What's that?

ASLAKSEN.

The press, sir!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

The press! That's just it! Haven't I always said that the press has marvellous influence in these days?

ASLAKSEN.

Oh, Chamberlain——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

No false modesty, Mr. Aslaksen! I haven't hitherto been in the habit of reading your paper, but henceforth I will. I shall subscribe for ten copies.

ASLAKSEN.

Oh, you can have twenty, Chamberlain!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Very well, then; let me have twenty. And if you need money, come to me; I mean to support the press; but I tell you once for all—I won't write for it.

RINGDAL.

What's this I hear? Your daughter engaged?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes; what do you say to that?

RINGDAL.

I am delighted! But when was it arranged?

FIELDBO.

[*Quickly.*] I'll tell you afterwards——

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Why, it was arranged on the Seventeenth of May.

FIELDBO.

What?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

The day little Miss Ragna was here.

THORA.

Father, father; did you know——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, my dear; I have known all along.

FIELDBO.

Oh, Chamberlain——!

THORA.

Who can have——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Another time, I should advise you young ladies not to talk so loud when I am taking my siesta in the bay window.

THORA.

Oh! so you were behind the curtains?

FIELDBO.

Now I understand!

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, you are the one to keep your own counsel——

FIELDBO.

Would it have been of any use for me to speak earlier?

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

You are right, Fieldbo. These days have taught me a lesson.

THORA.

[*Aside to* FIELDBO.] Yes, you c a n keep your own counsel. All this about Mr. Stensgård—why did you tell me nothing?

FIELDBO.

When a hawk is hovering over the dove-cote, one watches and shields his little dove—one does not alarm her. [*They are interrupted by* MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.

HEIRE.

[*To the* CHAMBERLAIN.] I'm sorry to tell you, Chamberlain, that the settlement of our little legal differences will have to be adjourned indefinitely.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Indeed! Why so?

HEIRE.

You must know I've accepted a post as society reporter on Aslaksen's paper.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I am glad to hear it.

[illegible].

And of course you [illegible] tand—with so much business on hand——

T[illegible]ERLAIN.

Very well, my old [illegible] can wait.

MADA[illegible]NJHOLMEN.

[*To* THORA.] Yes, I can tell you he's cost me many a tear, that bad man. But now I thank the Lord for Bastian. The other was false as the sea-foam; and then he's a terrible smoker, Miss Bratsberg, and frightfully particular about his meals. I found him a regular gourmand.

A SERVANT.

[*Enters from the left.*] Dinner is on the table.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

Come along, then, all of you. Mr. Lundestad, you shall sit beside me; and you too, Mr. Aslaksen.

RINGDAL.

We shall have a lot of toasts to drink after dinner!

HEIRE.

Yes; and perhaps an old man may be allowed to put in a claim for the toast of "Absent Friends."

LUNDESTAD.

One absent friend will return, Mr. Heire.

HEIRE.

Stensgård?

LUNDESTAD.

Yes; you'll see, gentlemen! In ten or fifteen years, Stensgård will either be in Parliament or in the Ministry —perhaps in both at once.[1]

FIELDBO.

In ten or fifteen years? Perhaps; but then he can scarcely stand at the head of the League of Youth.

HEIRE.

Why not?

FIELDBO.

Why, because by that time his youth will be—questionable.

[1] When this play was written, Ministers did not sit in the Storthing, and were not responsible to it. This state of things was altered—as Ibsen here predicts—in the great constitutional struggle of 1872–84, which ended in the victory of the Liberal party, their leader, Johan Sverdrup, becoming Prime Minister.

HEIRE.

Then he can stand at the head of the Questionable League, sir. That's what Lundestad means. He says like Napoleon—"It's the questionable people that make politicians"; hee-hee!

FIELDBO.

Well, after all is said and done, o u r League shall last through young days and questionable days as well; and it shall continue to be the League of Youth. When Stensgård founded his League, and was carried shoulder-high amid all the enthusiasm of Independence Day, he said—"Providence is on the side of the League of Youth." I think even Mr. Helle, theologian as he is, will let us apply that saying to ourselves.

THE CHAMBERLAIN.

I think so too, my friends; for truly we have been groping and stumbling in darkness; but good angels guided us.

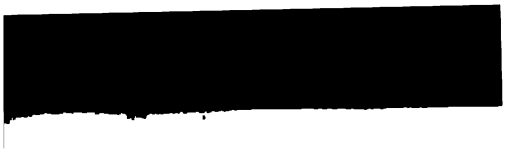
LUNDESTAD.

Oh, for that matter, I think the angels were only middling.

ASLAKSEN.

Yes; that comes of the local situation, Mr. Lundestad.

THE END.



PILLARS OF SOCIETY

PILLARS OF SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION*

In the eight years that intervened between *The League of Youth* and *Pillars of Society*—his second prose play of modern life—Ibsen published a small collection of his poems (1871), and his "World-Historic Drama," *Emperor and Galilean* (1873). After he had thus dismissed from his mind the figure of Julian the Apostate, which had haunted it ever since his earliest days in Rome, he deliberately abandoned, once for all, what may be called masquerade romanticism—that external stimulus to the imagination which lies in remoteness of time and unfamiliarity of scene and costume. It may be that, for the moment, he also intended to abandon, not merely romanticism, but romance—to deal solely with the literal and commonplace facts of life, studied in the dry light of everyday experience. If that was his purpose, it was very soon to break down; but in *Pillars of Society* he more nearly achieved it than in any other work.

Many causes contributed to the unusually long pause between *Emperor and Galilean* and *Pillars of Society*. The summer of 1874 was occupied with a visit to Norway —the first he had paid since the Hegira of ten years earlier. A good deal of time was devoted to the revision of some

* Copyright, 1906, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

of his earlier works, which were republished in Copenhagen; while the increasing vogue of his plays on the stage involved a considerable amount of business correspondence. *The Vikings* and *The Pretenders* were acted in these years, not only throughout Scandinavia, but at many of the leading theatres of Germany; and in 1876, after much discussion and negotiation, *Peer Gynt* was for the first time placed on the stage, in Christiania.

The first mention of *Pillars of Society* occurs in a letter from Ibsen to his publisher, Hegel, of October 23, 1875, in which he mentions that the first act, "always to me the most difficult part of a play," is ready, and states that it will be "a drama in five acts." Unless this be a mere slip of the pen, it is curious as showing that, even when the first act was finished, Ibsen did not foresee in detail the remainder of the action. In the course of further development an act dropped out of his scheme. On November 25, 1875, he reports to Hegel: "The first act of my new drama is ready—the fair copy written; I am now working at Act Second"; but it was not until the summer of 1877 that the completed manuscript was sent to Copenhagen. The book was published in the early autumn.

We find in the *Literary Remains* three brief and fragmentary scenarios of this play, two almost complete drafts of the first act, an almost entirely rejected draft of the beginning of the second act, and large fragments of a draft of the fourth act.

The "fore-works" of *Pillars of Society*, as indeed of most of its successors, show that Ibsen was far from

being one of the playwrights who have their plays clearly and definitely mapped out before they put pen to paper. Even in the second draft of his first act, he is still fumbling around after his characters and their relations. The germ of the play, I imagine, lay in its title; at any rate, the phrase occurs and is emphasised early in the first draft. The chief "pillar of society" was from the first conceived as one of the energetic manufacturer-merchants, with a score of irons in the fire, who are leading figures in all the minor Norwegian towns; and it was of course evident from the first that this pillar of society must be in some way flawed or hollow. But the precise nature of the flaw seems to have been undetermined even when the first draft of the first act was finished. At any rate, Bernick at that point shows none of the uneasiness which, in the completed play, the return of Johan and Lona naturally causes him; nor is there any preparation in the laying-out of the second act for the great scene between him and Johan in which the true state of matters is revealed. It may be noted that the list of characters includes "Madam Dorf," Dina's mother, the woman with whom Bernick had had the intrigue which he contrived to fasten on Johan Tönnesen. In the completed play she has been dead for years; but in the first draft she is alive, and Dina is in the habit of paying her surreptitious visits. We may assume, I think, that Ibsen contemplated some intervention on her part to clear Johan's character and bring the guilt home to Bernick. With her alive, at any rate, he can scarcely have had the idea of making Bernick try to suppress the scandal by sending Johan his documents to sea in a coffin-ship. This could not occur to him while

the best possible witness to the true state of affairs was living at his very doors. So that evidently the matter of the third and fourth acts, the complication of the seaworthy *Palm Tree* and unseaworthy *Indian Girl*, and the flight of Olaf on board the latter, was still far from the poet's conception.

A prominent character in both drafts of the first act is Bernick's blind mother, who has quite disappeared from the finished play. Mrs. Bernick, and Johan and Hilmar Tönnesen, are all three children of a blustering old curmudgeon, Mads Tönnesen, nicknamed "the badger." He was destined to drop out entirely, his nickname, and some of the traits of his character, being transferred to Morten Kiil in *An Enemy of the People*. In the first draft, Bernick is still arguing for the proposed railway, against the opposition of his business associates; in the completed play, the whole argument is conducted behind the scenes, and Bernick has triumphed before he makes his first appearance. This is a good instance of condensation. Another instance may be found in the treatment of Johan Tönnesen and Lona Hessel. In the first draft they are not half-brother and sister, but only, it would seem, distant cousins; they have not been together in America; and it is by pure chance that they arrive on the same day. We first hear of Johan in the following passage. Krap, Bernick's clerk, rushes in and tells of the arrival of a ship in need of repairs:

BERNICK. Bravo! . . . What ship is it?

KRAP. The barque *Indian Girl*, from New York, with dye-stuffs from Brazil to Petersburg.

BERNICK. And the captain?

KRAP. The captain was swept overboard, and the mate is lying ill, delirious. But a sailor that was on board as passenger took the command, and has brought the ship in. . . .

BERNICK. You have spoken to him, then?

KRAP. Yes. . . . Here is his card.

BERNICK. (reads) "John Rawlinson, Esqre., New Orleans."

In the second draft the name "Rawlinson" is changed to "Tennyson" which is supposed to be an Anglicised form of "Tönnesen." Presently Captain Rawlinson and the crew of the *Indian Girl* are seen coming up the street, and remarks are made on their ruffianly appearance:

MRS. SALVESEN. The captain is almost the worst of them; he looks just like a robber.

RECTOR RÖRLUND. Yes, he's the sort of man that would stick at nothing.

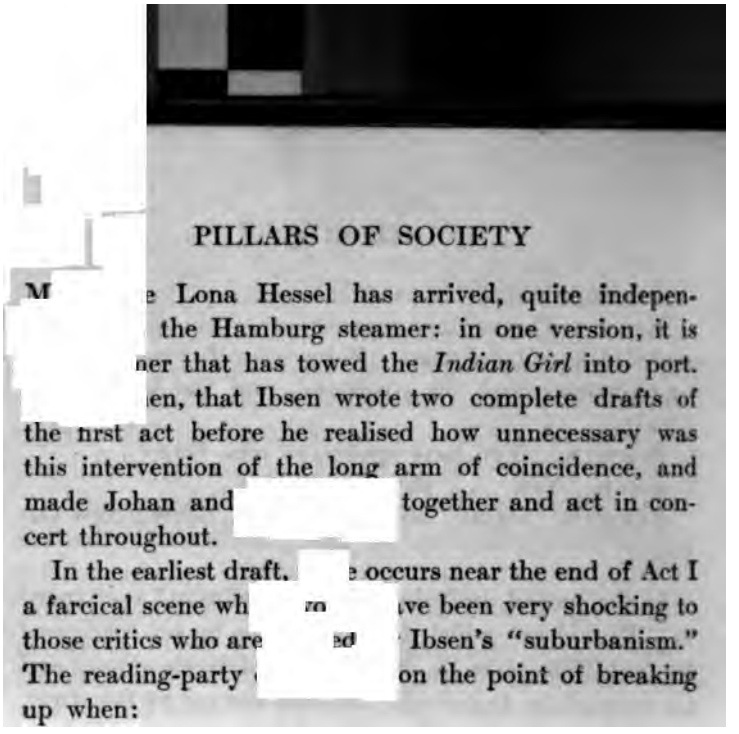
BERNICK. They are foreigners, Rector. One mustn't expect too much of them.

Then he goes out on the verandah and drops into English:

BERNICK (*bowing and calling out*). Good-morning, Master Rawlinson! This way, if you please, sir! I am Master Bernick!

CAPTAIN RAWLINSON (*waves his handkerchief and calls*). Very well, Karsten; but first, three hurrahs for the old grævling (*badger*)——

—and the sailors pass on to make a demonstration before the house of Tönnesen, Rawlinson-Tönnesen's father.



PILLARS OF SOCIETY

M e Lona Hessel has arrived, quite indepen-
the Hamburg steamer: in one version, it is
ner that has towed the *Indian Girl* into port.
en, that Ibsen wrote two complete drafts of
the nrst act before he realised how unnecessary was
this intervention of the long arm of coincidence, and
made Johan and together and act in con-
cert throughout.

In the earliest draft. occurs near the end of Act I
a farcical scene wh ve been very shocking to
those critics who are Ibsen's "suburbanism."
The reading-party on the point of breaking
up when:

THE CUSTOM-HOUSE OFFICER'S SERVANT (*enters by the garden gate*). The master told me to say that the mistress must come home at once; the cook has spoilt the fish-soup.

MRS. RUMMEL. Oh, these servants, these servants! One can't trust them for a moment! Good-bye, good-bye; we shall meet to-morrow. (*Exit hastily.*)

MRS. SALVESEN. Yes, that's what comes of trusting your house to servants.

THE APOTHECARY'S TWO LITTLE GIRLS (*at the garden gate*). Mamma, mamma, you must come and look after Nicolai; he's fallen into the washing-tub. . . .

MRS. SALVESEN. Oh, these children, these children! Good-bye! I must run as fast as I can. (*Rushes out.*)

MRS. HOLT. Yes, that's what happens when you have everything standing open. I make it a rule to keep everything under lock and key; and the keys I keep here. (*Indicating her pocket.*)

THE POSTMAN (*comes tearing down the street*). Oh, Lord, ma'am, you must make haste home! The steamer will get away without the mail.

MRS. HOLT. The steamer?

THE POSTMAN. Yes; the second bell has rung, and the postmaster can't get on board with the mail until you come home.

MRS. HOLT. What nonsense! Can't he get the mail off without me?

THE POSTMAN. No, for you've locked up his trousers in the wardrobe.

MRS. HOLT. Oh, goodness gracious! These men, these men! They can never do a thing for themselves! (*Rushes out with the postman.*)

One cannot actually bewail the loss of this scene. I may add that the coffee-parliament of ladies, which disappears after the first act of the completed play, was apparently at first intended to run through the whole action. In the original conception, too, each of the acts was to have passed in a different scene. The process of growth was at the same time a process of condensation.

The theatrical success of *Pillars of Society* was immediate and striking. First performed in Copenhagen, November 18, 1877, it soon found its way to all the leading stages of Scandinavia. In Berlin, in the early spring of 1878, it was produced at five different theatres within a single fortnight; and it has ever since maintained its hold on the German stage. Before the end of the century it had been acted more than twelve hundred times in Germany and Austria. An adaptation of the play, by the

present writer, was produced at the old Gaiety Theatre, London, for a single performance, on the afternoon of December 15, 1880—this being the first time that Ibsen's name had appeared on an English playbill. Again, in 1889, a single performance of it was given at the Opera Comique Theatre; [illegible]ain in May, 1901, the Stage Society gave two perfor[illegible]s of it at the Strand Theatre. In the United States it has been acted frequently in German, and Mrs. Fiske has presented it in English, with considerable success. The play did not reach the French stage until 1896, when it was performed by M. Lugné-Poë's organisation, L'Œuvre. In other countries one hears of a single performance of it, here and there; but, except in Scandinavia and Germany, it has nowhere taken a permanent hold upon the theatre. Nor is the reason far to seek. By the time the English, American, and French public had fully awakened to the existence of Ibsen, he himself had so far outgrown the phase of his development marked by *Pillars of Society* that the play already seemed commonplace and old-fashioned. It exactly suited the German public of the 'eighties; it was exactly on a level with their theatrical intelligence. But it was above the theatrical intelligence of the English public, and—I had almost said below that of the French public. This is, of course, an exaggeration. What I mean is that there was no possible reason why the countrymen of Augier and Dumas should take any special interest in *Pillars of Society*. It was not obviously in advance of these masters in technical skill, and the vein of Teutonic sentiment running through it could not greatly appeal to the Parisian public of that period.

Thus it is not in the least surprising that, outside of Germany and Scandinavia, *Pillars of Society* had everywhere to follow in the wake of *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*, and was everywhere found something of an anti-climax.

It is of all Ibsen's works the least characteristic, because, acting on a transitory phase of theory, he has been almost successful in divesting it of poetic charm. There is not even a Selma in it. Of his later plays, only *An Enemy of the People* is equally prosaic in substance; and it is raised far above the level of the commonplace by the genial humour, the magnificent creative energy, displayed in the character of Stockmann. In *Pillars of Society* there is nothing that rises above the commonplace. Compared with Stockmann, Bernick seems almost a lay-figure, and even Lona Hessel is an intellectual construction—formed of a blend of new theory with old sentiment—rather than an absolute creation, a living and breathing woman, like Nora, or Mrs. Alving, or Rebecca, or Hedda. This is, in brief, the only play of Ibsen's in which plot can be said to preponderate over character. The plot is extraordinarily ingenious and deftly pieced together. Several of the scenes are extremely effective from the theatrical point of view, and in a good many individual touches we may recognise the incomparable master-hand. One of these touches is the scene between Bernick and Rörlund in the third act, in which Bernick's craving for casuistical consolation meets with so painful a rebuff. Only a great dramatist could have devised this scene; but to compare it with a somewhat similar passage in *The Pretenders*—the scene in the fourth act between King Skulë and Jatgeir Skald—is to realise what

is meant by the difference between dramatic poetry and dramatic prose.

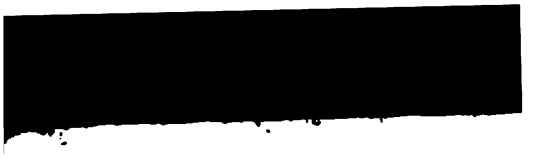
I have called Lona Hessel a composite character because she embodies in a concentrated form the two different strains of feeling that run through the whole play. Beyond the general attack on social pharisaism announced in the very title, we have a clear assertion of the claim of women to moral and economical individuality and independence. Dina, with her insistence on "becoming something for herself" before she will marry Johan, unmistakably foreshadows Nora and Petra. But at the same time the poet is far from having cleared his mind of the old ideal of the infinitely self-sacrificing, dumbly devoted woman whose life has no meaning save in relation to some more or less unworthy male—the Ingeborg-Agnes-Solveig ideal, we may call it. In the original edition of *The Pretenders*, Ingeborg said to Skulë: "To love, to sacrifice all, and to be forgotten, that is woman's saga"; and out of that conception arose the very tenderly-touched figure of Martha in this play. If Martha, then, stands for the old ideal—the ideal of the older generation—and Dina for the ideal of the younger generation, Lona Hessel hovers between the two. At first sight she seems like an embodiment of the "strong-minded female," the champion of Woman's Rights, and despiser of all feminine graces and foibles. But in the end it appears that her devotion to Bernick has been no less deep and enduring than Martha's devotion to Johan. Her "old friendship does not rust" is a delightful speech; but it points back to the Ibsen of the past, not forward to the Ibsen of the future. Yet this is not wholly true; for the

strain of sentiment which inspired it never became extinct in the poet. He believed to the end in the possibility and the beauty of great, self-forgetful human emotions; and there his philosophy went very much deeper than that of some of his disciples.

In consistency of style, and in architectural symmetry of construction, the play marks a great advance upon *The League of Youth*. From the end of the first act to the middle of the last, it is a model of skilful plot-development. The exposition, which occupies so much of the first act, is carried out by means of a somewhat cumbrous mechanism. No doubt the "Kaffee-Klatsch" is in great measure justified as a picture of the tattling society of the little town. It does not altogether ignore the principle of economy. But it is curious to note the rapid shrinkage in the poet's expositions. Here we have the necessary information conveyed by a whole party of subsidiary characters. In the next play, *A Doll's House*, we have still a set exposition, but two characters suffice for it, and one the heroine. In the next play again—that is to say, in *Ghosts*—the poet has arrived at his own peculiar formula, and the exposition is indistinguishably merged in the action. Still greater is the contrast between the conclusion of *Pillars of Society* and that of *A Doll's House*. It would be too much to call Bernick's conversion and promise to turn over a new leaf as conventional as the Chamberlain's right-about-face in *The League of Youth*. Bernick has passed through a terrible period of mental agony which may well have brought home to him a conviction of sin. Still, the way in which everything suddenly comes right, Olaf is recovered, the *Indian Girl* is

stopped, Aune is reconciled to the use of the new machines, and even the weather improves, so as to promise Johan and Dina a prosperous voyage to America—all this is a manifest concession to popular optimism. We are not to conceive, of course, that the poet deliberately compromised with an artistic ideal for the sake of popularity, but rather that he had not yet arrived at the ideal of logical and moral consistency which he was soon afterwards to attain. To use his own metaphor, the ghost of the excellent Eugène Scribe still walked in him. He still instinctively thought of a play as a storm in a tea-cup, which must naturally blow over in the allotted two-hours-and-a-half. Even in his next play—so gradual is the process of evolution—he still makes the external storm, so to speak, blow over at the appointed time. But, instead of the general reconciliation and serenity upon which the curtain falls in *The League of Youth* and *Pillars of Society*—instead of the "happy ending" which Helmer so

title by which Bernick is addressed. Rörlund, in the original, is called "Adjunkt"—that is to say, he is an assistant master in a school, subordinate to the head-master or rector.



PILLARS OF SOCIETY

(1877)

CHARACTERS

CONSUL BERNICK.
MRS. BERNICK, *his wife.*
OLAF, *their son, a boy of thirteen.*
MISS BERNICK [MARTHA], *the Consul's sister.*
JOHAN TÖNNESEN, *Mrs. Bernick's younger brother.*
MISS HESSEL [LONA], *her elder step-sister.*
HILMAR TONNESEN, *Mrs. Bernick's cousin.*
DOCTOR RORLUND, *a schoolmaster.*
RUMMEL, VIGELAND, SANDSTAD, } *Merchants.*
DINA DORF, *a young girl living in the Consul's house.*
KRAP, *the Consul's chief clerk.*
AUNE, *a foreman shipbuilder.*
MRS. RUMMEL.
MRS. POSTMASTER HOLT.
MRS. DOCTOR LYNGE.
MISS RUMMEL.
MISS HOLT.

Townspeople and others, foreign sailors, steamboat passengers, etc.

The action takes place in Consul Bernick's house, in a small Norwegian seaport.

Pronunciation of Names: Rörlund=Rörloond; Dina=Deena; Rummel=Roomel; Vigeland=Veeghëland; Aune=Ownë; Lynge =Lynghë. The modified "ö" is pronounced much as in German.

PILLARS OF SOCIETY

ACT FIRST

A spacious garden-room in CONSUL BERNICK'S *house. In front, to the left, a door leads into the Consul's office; farther back, in the same wall, a similar door. In the middle of the opposite wall is a large entrance door. The back wall is almost entirely composed of plate-glass, with an open doorway leading to a broad flight of steps,*[1] *over which a sun-shade is let down. Beyond the steps a part of the garden can be seen, enclosed by a railing with a little gate. Beyond the railing, and running parallel with it, is a street of small, brightly painted wooden houses. It is summer, and the sun shines warmly. Now and then people pass along the street: they stop and speak to each other: customers come and go at the little corner shop, and so forth.*

In the garden-room a number of ladies are gathered round a table. At the head of the table sits MRS. BERNICK. *On her left sit* MRS. HOLT *and her daughter; next to them,* MRS. *and* MISS RUMMEL. *On* MRS. BERNICK'S *right sit* MRS. LYNGE, MISS BERNICK (MARTHA), *and* DINA DORF. *All the ladies are busy sewing. On the table lie large heaps of half-*

[1] "Havetrappe" here seems to imply a flight of steps with so wide landing at the top as practically to form a verandah, under the n-shade. In subsequent stage directions, the word is rendered by verandah."

ed and cut-out linen, and other articles of clothing. Farther back, at a little table on which are two flower-pots and a glass of eau sucré, *sits* DOCTOR RÖRLUND, *reading from a book with gilt edges, a word here and there being heard by the audience. Out in the garden* OLAF BERNICK *is running about, shooting at marks with bow.*

Presently AUNE, *the hipbuilder, enters quietly by the door on the he reading ceases for a moment;* MRS. B *ds to him and points to the left-hand door. es quietly to the Consul's door, knocks es a moment, then knocks again.* KRAP, *'s clerk, opens the door and comes out with his hat in his hand and papers under his arm.*

KRAP.

Oh, it's you knocking?

AUNE.

The Consul sent for me.

KRAP.

Yes; but he can't see you just now; he has commissioned me——

AUNE.

You? I'd a deal sooner——

KRAP.

——commissioned me to tell you this: You must stop these Saturday lectures to the workmen.

AUNE.

Indeed? I sort of thought my free time was my own to—

KRAP.

Not to make the men useless in work-time. Last Saturday you must needs hold forth about the harm that will be done to the workmen by our machines and new method of work. What makes you do that?

AUNE.

I do it to support society.

KRAP.

That's an odd notion! The Consul says you are undermining society.

AUNE.

My "society" is not the Consul's "society," Mr. Krap! Seeing as I'm the foreman of the Industrial Society, I have to—

KRAP.

Your first duty is as foreman of Consul Bernick's shipyard. Your first duty is to the society called Bernick & Co., for by it we all live.—Well, now you know what the Consul wanted to say to you.

AUNE.

The Consul wouldn't have said it like that, Mr. Krap! But I know well enough what I've got to thank for this.

It's that cursèd American that has put in for repairs. These people think work can be done here as they do it over there, and that——

KRAP.

Well, well—I have no time to go into generalities. I have told you the Consul's wishes, and that is enough. Now you had better go down to the yard again; you're sure to be wanted; I shall be down myself presently.—I beg your pardon, ladies!

[*He bows, and goes out through the garden and down the street.* AUNE *goes quietly out to the right.* DOCTOR RÖRLUND, *who during the whole of the foregoing conversation has continued reading, presently closes the book with a bang.*

RÖRLUND.

There, my dear ladies, that is the end.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Oh, what an instructive tale!

MRS. HOLT.

And so moral!

MRS. BERNICK.

Such a book really gives one a great deal to think over.

RÖRLUND.

Yes; it forms a refreshing contrast to what we unhappily see every day, both in newspapers and magazines. The rouged and gilded exterior flaunted by the great communities—what does it really conceal? Hollowness

and rottenness, if I may say so. They have no moral foundation under their feet. In one word—they are whited sepulchres, these great communities of the modern world.

MRS. HOLT.

Too true! too true!

MRS. RUMMEL.

We have only to look at the crew of the American ship that's lying here.

RÖRLUND.

Oh, I won't speak of such scum of humanity. But even in the higher classes—how do matters stand? Doubt and fermenting unrest on every side; the soul at war with itself; insecurity in every relation of life. See how the family is undermined!—how a brazen spirit of subversion is assailing the most vital truths!

DINA.

[*Without looking up.*] But many great things are done there too, are they not?

RÖRLUND.

Great things——? I don't understand——

MRS. HOLT.

[*Astonished.*] Good heavens, Dina——!

MRS. RUMMEL.

[*At the same time.*] Oh, Dina, how can you?

RÖRLUND.

It would scarcely be for our good if such "great things" came into fashion among us. No; we ought to thank God that our lot is ordered as it is. A tare, alas! will now and th spring up among the wheat; but we honestly do (st to weed it out. The great point, ladies, is to keep ety pure—to exclude from it all the questionable elements which an impatient age would force upon us.

MRS. HOLT.

Ah, there's m ugh of that sort of thing, unfortunately.

MMEL.

Yes; last y ed the railway by a hair's-breadth.

RNICK.

Karsten managed to put a stop to that.

RÖRLUND.

Providentially, Mrs. Bernick! You may be sure your husband was an instrument in a higher hand when he refused to support that scheme.

MRS. BERNICK.

And yet the papers said such horrid things about him! But we are quite forgetting to thank you, my dear Doctor. It is really more than kind of you to sacrifice so much of your time to us.

RÖRLUND.

Oh, not at all; in holiday-time, you know——

MRS. BERNICK.

Yes, yes; but it's a sacrifice, nevertheless.

RÖRLUND.

[*Drawing his chair nearer.*] Pray don't speak of it, dear lady. Do not all of you make sacrifices for a good cause? And do you not make them willingly and gladly? The Lapsed and Lost, for whom we are working, are like wounded soldiers on a battlefield; you, ladies, are the Red Cross Guild, the Sisters of Mercy, who pick lint for these unhappy sufferers, tie the bandages gently round the wounds, dress, and heal them——

MRS. BERNICK.

It must be a great blessing to see everything in so beautiful a light.

RÖRLUND.

The gift is largely inborn; but it can in some measure be acquired. The great point is to see things in the light of a serious vocation. What do y o u say, Miss Bernick? Do you not find that you have, as it were, firmer ground under your feet since you have devoted your life to your school-work?

MARTHA.

I scarcely know what to say. Often, when I am pent up in the schoolroom, I wish I were far out upon the stormy sea.

RÖRLUND.

Yes, yes; that is temptation, my dear Miss Bernick. You must bar the door against such an unquiet guest. The stormy sea—of course you do not mean that literally; you mean the great billowing world, where so many go to wreck. And do you really find so much to attract you in the life you hear rushing and surging outside? Just look out into the street. Look at the people in the sweltering sunshine, toiling and moiling over their paltry affairs! Ours, surely, is the better part, sitting here in the pleasant shade, and turning our backs toward the quarter from which disturbance might arise.

MARTHA.

Yes, no doubt you are quite right——

RÖRLUND.

And in a house like this—in a good and pure home, where the Family is seen in its fairest shape—where peace and unity reign—— [*To* MRS. BERNICK.] What are you listening to, Mrs. Bernick?

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Who has turned towards the door of the Consul's room.*] How loudly they are talking in there!

RÖRLUND.

Is anything particular going on?

MRS. BERNICK.

I don't know. There is evidently some one with my husband.

HILMAR TÖNNESEN, *with a cigar in his mouth, comes in by the door on the right, but stops on seeing so many ladies.*

HILMAR.

Oh, I beg your pardon—— [*Turning to go.*

MRS. BERNICK.

Come in, Hilmar, come in; you are not disturbing us. Do you want anything?

HILMAR.

No. I just happened to be passing. Good-morning, ladies. [*To* MRS. BERNICK.] Well, what is going to come of it?

MRS. BERNICK.

Of what?

HILMAR.

You know Bernick has called a cabinet council.

MRS. BERNICK.

Indeed! What is it about?

HILMAR.

Oh, this railway nonsense again.

MRS. RUMMEL.

No! Is it possible?

MRS. BERNICK.

Poor Karsten—is he to have all that worry over again——?

RÖRLUND.

Why, what can be the meaning of this, Mr. Tönnesen? Consul Bernick gave it plainly to be understood last year that he would have no railway here.

HILMAR.

Yes, I thought so too; but I met Krap just now, and he told me the railway question was to the fore again, and that Bernick was holding a conference with three of our capitalists.

MRS. RUMMEL.

I was certain I heard Rummel's voice.

HILMAR.

Yes, Mr. Rummel is there, of course, and Sandstad and Michael Vigeland—"Holy Michael," as they call him.

RÖRLUND.

H'm——

HILMAR.

I beg your pardon, Doctor.

MRS. BERNICK.

Just when everything was so nice and quiet too!

HILMAR.

Well, for my part, I shouldn't mind their beginning their bickerings again. It would be a variety at least.

RÖRLUND.

I think we can dispense with that sort of variety.

HILMAR.

It depends upon one's constitution. Some natures crave for a Titanic struggle now and then. But there's no room for that sort of thing in our petty provincial life, and it's not every one that can—— [*Turning over the leaves of* RÖRLUND'S *book.*] "Woman as the Servant of Society"—what rubbish is this!

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, Hilmar, you mustn't say that. You have surely not read the book.

HILMAR.

No, and don't intend to.

MRS. BERNICK.

You seem out of sorts to-day.

HILMAR.

Yes, I am.

MRS. BERNICK.

Perhaps you didn't sleep well last night?

HILMAR.

No, I slept very badly. I went a walk yesterday evening, by my doctor's orders. Then I looked in at the club, and read an account of a polar expedition. There is something bracing in watching men at war with the elements.

MRS. RUMMEL.

But it doesn't seem to have agreed with you, Mr. Tönnesen?

HILMAR.

No, it didn't agree with me at all. I lay tossing all night half asleep, and dreamt I was being chased by a horrible walrus.

OLAF.

[*Who has come up the garden steps.*] Have you been chased by a walrus, Uncle?

HILMAR.

I dreamt it, little stupid! Do you still go on playing with that ridiculous bow? Why don't you get hold of a proper gun?

OLAF.

Oh, I should love to, but——

HILMAR.

There would be some sense in a gun; the very act of pulling the trigger braces your nerves.

OLAF.

And then I could shoot bears, Uncle. But father won't let me.

MRS. BERNICK.

You really must not put such ideas into his head, Hilmar.

HILMAR.

Ha—there we have the rising generation nowadays! Goodness knows there's plenty of talk about pluck and daring, but it all ends in play; no one has any real crav-

ing for the discipline that lies in looking danger manfully in the face. Don't stand and point at me with your bow, stupid; it might go off.

OLAF.

No, Uncle, there's no bolt in it.

HILMAR.

How do you know? There may very likely be a bolt in it. Take it away, I tell you'—Why the deuce have you never gone to America in one of your father's ships? There you could go buffalo-hunting or fighting the red-skins.

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, Hilmar——

OLAF.

I should like to very much, Uncle; and then perhaps I might meet Uncle Johan and Aunt Lona.

HILMAR.

H'm—don't talk nonsense.

MRS. BERNICK.

Now you can go down the garden again, Olaf.

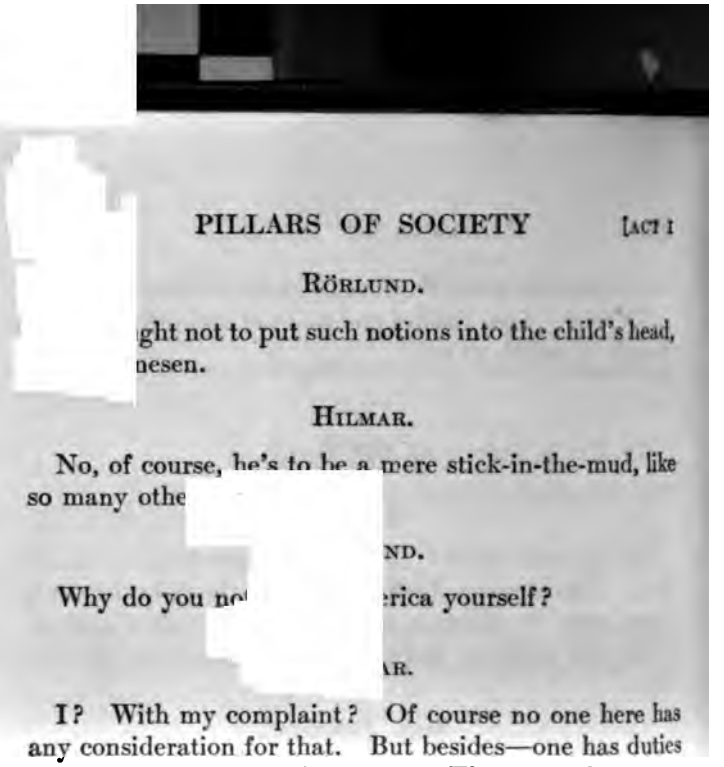
OLAF.

Mayn't I go out into the street, mother?

MRS. BERNICK.

Yes; but take care not to go too far.

[OLAF *runs out through the garden gate*



RÖRLUND.

ght not to put such notions into the child's head, nesen.

HILMAR.

No, of course, he's to be a mere stick-in-the-mud, like so many othe

ND.

Why do you no erica yourself?

AR.

I? With my complaint? Of course no one here has any consideration for that. But besides—one has duties towards the society one belongs to. There must be some one to hold high the banner of the ideal. Ugh, there he is shouting again!

THE LADIES.

Who is shouting?

HILMAR.

Oh, I don't know. They are talking rather loud in there, and it makes me so nervous.

MRS. RUMMEL.

It is my husband you hear, Mr. Tönnesen; you must remember he is so accustomed to addressing great assemblies——

RÖRLUND.

The others are not whispering either, it seems to me.

HILMAR.

No, sure enough, when it's a question of keeping the purse-strings tight——; everything here ends in paltry material calculations. Ugh!

MRS. BERNICK.

At least that is better than it used to be, when everything ended in dissipation.

MRS. LYNGE.

Were things really so bad as all that?

MRS. RUMMEL.

They were as bad as bad could be, Mrs. Lynge. You may thank your stars that you didn't live here then.

MRS. HOLT.

Yes, there has certainly been a great change! When I think of the time when I was a girl——

MRS. RUMMEL.

Oh, you needn't go back more than fourteen or fifteen years—heaven help us, what a life people led! There was a dancing club and a music club——

MARTHA.

And the dramatic club—I remember it quite well.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes; it was there your play was acted, Mr. Tönnesen.

HILMAR.

[*At the back.*] Oh, nonsense——!

RÖRLUND.

Mr. Tönnesen's play?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes; that was long before you came here, Doctor. Besides, it only ran one night.

MRS. LYNGE.

Wasn't it in that play you told me you played the heroine, Mrs. Rummel?

MRS. RUMMEL.

[*Glancing at* RÖRLUND.] I? I really don't remember, Mrs. Lynge. But I remember too well all the noisy gaiety that went on among families.

MRS. HOLT.

Yes; I actually know houses where two great dinner-parties were given in one week.

MRS. LYNGE.

And then there was a company of strolling actors, they tell me.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes, that was the worst of all——!

MRS. HOLT.

[*Uneasily.*] H'm, h'm——

MRS. RUMMEL.

Oh, actors did you say? No, I remember nothing about them.

MRS. LYNGE.

Why, I was told they caused all sorts of trouble. What was it that really happened?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Oh, nothing at all, Mrs. Lynge.

MRS. HOLT.

Dina, dear, hand me that piece of linen, please.

MRS. BERNICK.

[*At the same time.*] Dina, my love, will you go and ask Katrina to bring in the coffee.

MARTHA.

I will go with you, Dina.

[DINA *and* MARTHA *go out by the second door on the left.*

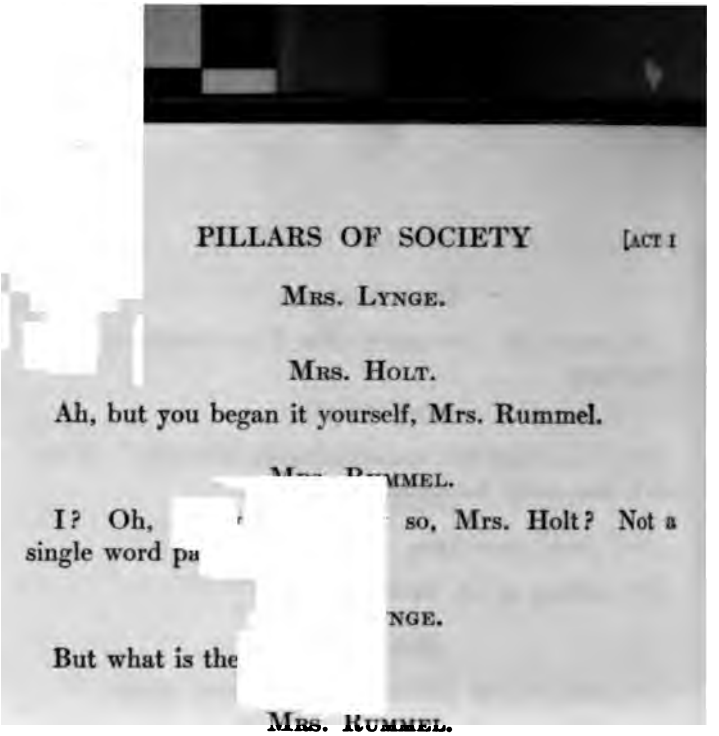
MRS. BERNICK.

[*Rising.*] And you must excuse me for a moment, ladies; I think we had better take our coffee outside.

[*She goes out to the verandah and begins arranging a table;* RÖRLUND *stands in the doorway talking to her.* HILMAR *sits outside smoking.*

MRS. RUMMEL.

[*Softly.*] Oh dear, Mrs. Lynge, how you frightened me!



MRS. RUMMEL.

How could you begin to talk about——! Only think —didn't you see that Dina was in the room?

MRS. LYNGE.

Dina? Why, bless me! what has she to do with——?

MRS. HOLT.

Here, in this house, too! Don't you know that it was Mrs. Bernick's brother——?

MRS. LYNGE.

What about him? I know nothing at all; remember, I am quite new to the town——

MRS. RUMMEL.

Then you haven't heard that——? H'm—— [*To her daughter.*] You can go down the garden for a little while, Hilda.

MRS. HOLT.

You too, Netta. And be sure you are very kind to poor Dina when she comes.

[MISS RUMMEL *and* MISS HOLT *go out into the garden.*

MRS. LYNGE.

Well, what about Mrs. Bernick's brother?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Don't you know, he was the hero of the scandal?

MRS. LYNGE.

Mr. Hilmar the hero of a scandal!

MRS. RUMMEL.

Good heavens, no; Hilmar is her cousin Mrs. Lynge. I am speaking of her brother——

MRS. HOLT.

The Prodigal Tönnesen——

MRS. RUMMEL.

Johan was his name. He ran away to America.

MRS. HOLT.

Had to run away, you understand.

MRS. LYNGE.

Then the scandal was about him?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes, it was a sort of—what shall I call it?—a sort of a —with Dina's mother. Oh, I remember it as if it were yesterday. Johan Tönnesen was in old Mrs. Bernick's office; Karsten Bernick had just come home from Paris —it was before his engagement——

MRS. LYNGE.

Yes, but the scandal——?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Well, you see, that winter Möller's comedy company was in the town——

MRS. HOLT.

——and in the company were Dorf and his wife. All the young men were mad about her.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes, heaven knows what they could see in her. But one evening Dorf came home very late——

MRS. HOLT.

——and quite unexpectedly——

MRS. RUMMEL.

And there he found—no, really I don't think I can tell you.

MRS. HOLT.

Why, you know, Mrs. Rummel, he found nothing, for the door was locked on the inside.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes; that's what I say—he found the door locked. And—only think!—some one inside had to jump out of the window.

MRS. HOLT.

Right from the attic window!

MRS. LYNGE.

And it was Mrs. Bernick's brother?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Of course it was.

MRS. LYNGE.

And that was why he ran away to America?

MRS. HOLT.

He had to make himself scarce, I can assure you.

MRS. RUMMEL.

For afterwards something else was found out, almost as bad. Only think, he had been making free with the cash-box——

MRS. HOLT.

But, after all, no one knows exactly about that Mrs. Rummel; it may have been mere gossip.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Well, I really must say——! Wasn't it known over the whole town? For that matter, wasn't old Mrs. Ber-

nick on the point of going bankrupt? Rummel himself has told me that. But heaven forbid *I* should say anything!

MRS. HOLT.

Well, the money didn't go to Madam Dorf, at any rate, for she——

MRS. LYNGE.

Yes, what became of Dina's parents?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Oh, Dorf deserted both wife and child. But Madam was impudent enough to remain here a whole year. She didn't dare to show herself in the theatre again; but she made a living by washing and sewing——

MRS. HOLT.

And she tried to set up a dancing-school.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Of course it was a failure. What parents could trust their children with such a person? But she could not hold out long; the fine Madam wasn't accustomed to work, you see; some chest trouble set in, and carried her off.

MRS. LYNGE.

What a wretched story!

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes, you may believe it has been a terrible thing for the Bernicks. It is the dark spot on the sun of their hap-

piness, as Rummel once expressed it. So you must never talk of these things in this house again, Mrs. Lynge.

MRS. HOLT.

And, for heaven's sake, don't mention the step-sister either.

MRS. LYNGE.

Yes, by-the-bye, Mrs. Bernick has a step-sister too?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Used to have—fortunately; for now they don't recognise the relationship. Yes, she was a strange being! Would you believe it, she cut her hair short, and went about in rainy weather with men's shoes on!

MRS. HOLT.

And when her step-brother—the ne'er-do-well—had run away, and the whole town was of course crying out against him—what do you think she did? Why, she followed him.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes, but think of the scandal before she left, Mrs. Holt!

MRS. HOLT.

Hush—don't talk about it.

MRS. LYNGE.

What, was there a scandal about her too?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes, I'll tell you all about it, Mrs. Lynge. Bernick had just proposed to Betty Tönnesen; and as he was coming, with her on his arm, into her aunt's room to announce the engagement to her——

MRS. HOLT.

The Tönnesens were orphans, you understand.

MRS. RUMMEL.

——Lona Hessel rose from her chair, and gave the handsome, aristocratic Karsten Bernick a ringing box on the ear!

MRS. LYNGE.

Well, I never——!

MRS. HOLT.

Yes, every one knows it.

MRS. RUMMEL.

And then she packed up her traps and went off to America.

MRS. LYNGE.

She must have had designs upon him herself.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes, that was just it. She imagined he was going to propose to her as soon as he came home from Paris.

MRS. HOLT.

Just fancy her dreaming of such a thing! Bernick—a polished young man-of-the-world—a perfect gentleman—the darling of all the ladies——

MRS. RUMMEL.

——and so high-principled, too, Mrs. Holt—so moral.

MRS. LYNGE.

Then what has become of this Miss Hessel in America?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Well—over that, as Rummel once expressed it, there rests a veil which should scarcely be lifted.

MRS. LYNGE.

What does that mean?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Of course the family hears nothing from her now; but every one in town knows that she has sung for money in taverns over there——

MRS. HOLT.

——and has given lectures——

MRS. RUMMEL.

——and has published an utterly crazy book.

MRS. LYNGE.

Is it possible——?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes, Lona Hessel, too, is certainly a sun-spot in the Bernicks' happiness. But now you know the whole story, Mrs. Lynge. Heaven knows, I have only told it to put you on your guard as to what you say.

MRS. LYNGE.

You may be quite easy on that point. But poor Dina Dorf! I really feel very sorry for her.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Oh, for her it was an absolute stroke of luck. Only think, if she had remained in her parents' hands! Of course we all took an interest in her, and tried to instil good principles into her mind. At last Miss Bernick arranged that she should come and live here.

MRS. HOLT.

But she has always been a difficult girl to deal with—the effect of bad example, you know. Of course she is not like one of our own children—we have to make the best of her, Mrs. Lynge.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Hush, there she comes. [*Loud.*] Yes, as you say, Dina is really quite a clever girl—— What, are you there, Dina? We are just finishing our work here.

MRS. HOLT.

Ah, how nice your coffee smells, my dear Dina. Such a cup of coffee in the forenoon——

MRS. BERNICK.

[*In the verandah.*] The coffee is ready, ladies.

[MARTHA *and* DINA *have meanwhile helped the servant to bring in the coffee things. All the ladies go out and sit down; they vie with each other in talking kindly to* DINA. *After a time she comes into the room and looks for her sewing.*

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Out at the coffee-table.*] Dina, don't you want——?

DINA.

No, thanks; I don't care for any.

[*She sits down to sew.* MRS. BERNICK *and* RÖRLUND *exchange a few words; a moment after, he comes into the room.*

RÖRLUND.

[*Goes up to the table, as if looking for something, and says in a low voice.*] Dina.

DINA.

Yes.

RÖRLUND.

Why will you not come out?

DINA.

When I came with the coffee I could see by the strange lady's looks that they had been talking about me.

RÖRLUND.

And did you not notice, too, how kindly she s
you?

DINA.

But that is what I can't bear.

RÖRLUND.

Yours is a rebellious nature, Dina.

DINA.

Yes.

RÖRLUND.

What makes it so?

DINA.

It has never been otherwise.

RÖRLUND.

But could you not try to change?

DINA.

No.

RÖRLUND.

Why not?

DINA.

[*Looks up at him.*] Because I belong to the '
and Lost."

RÖRLUND.

Fie, Dina!

DINA.

And so did my mother before me.

RÖRLUND.

Who has spoken to you of such things?

DINA.

No one; they never speak. Why don't they? They all handle me as gingerly as though I would fall to pieces, if—— Oh, how I hate all this good-heartedness!

RÖRLUND.

My dear Dina, I can very well understand that you must feel oppressed here, but——

DINA.

Oh, if I could only go far away! I could get on well enough by myself, if only I lived among people that weren't so—so——

RÖRLUND.

So what?

DINA.

So proper and moral.

RÖRLUND.

Come, Dina, you do not mean that.

DINA.

Oh, you know very well h o w I mean it. Every day Hilda and Netta come here that I may take example by

them. I can never be as well-behaved as they are, a
I w i l l n o t be. Oh, if only I were far away, I da
say I could be good.

RÖRLUND.

You a r e good, my dear Dina.

DINA.

What good does that do me, here?

RÖRLUND.

Then you are seriously thinking of going away?

DINA.

I would not remain here a day longer, if y o u we not here.

RÖRLUND.

Tell me, Dina—what is it that really makes you like be with me?

DINA.

You teach me so much that is beautiful.

RÖRLUND.

Beautiful? Do you call what I can teach you bea tiful?

DINA.

Yes; or rather—you teach me nothing; but when hear you speak, it makes me think of so much that beautiful.

RÖRLUND.

What do you understand, then, by a beautiful thing?

DINA.

I have never thought of that.

RÖRLUND.

Then think of it now. What do you understand by a beautiful thing?

DINA.

A beautiful thing is something great—and far away.

RÖRLUND.

H'm.—My dear Dina—I sympathise with you from the bottom of my heart.

DINA.

Is t h a t all?

RÖRLUND.

You know very well how unspeakably dear you are to me.

DINA.

If I were Hilda or Netta you would not be afraid to let any one see it.

RÖRLUND.

Oh, Dina, you cannot possibly realise the thousand considerations—— When a man is singled out as a moral pillar of the society he lives in, why—he cannot be too

careful. If I were only sure that people would not misinterpret my motives—— But no matter; you must and shall be helped to rise. Dina, shall we make a bargain that when I come—when circumstances permit me to come—and say: Here is my hand—you will take it and be my wife?—Do you promise me that, Dina?

DINA.

Yes.

RÖRLUND.

Thank you, thank you!—Oh, Dina, I love you so—Sh! some one is coming. Dina, for my sake—go out to the others.

[*She goes out to the coffee-table. At the same moment* RUMMEL, SANDSTAD, *and* VIGELAND *enter from the Consul's office, followed by* CONSUL BERNICK, *who has a bundle of papers in his hand.*

BERNICK.

Then that matter is settled.

VIGELAND.

Yes, with the blessing of God, so let it be.

RUMMEL.

It is settled, Bernick! A Norseman's word stands firm as the Dovrefjeld, you know!

BERNICK.

And no one is to give in or fall away, whatever opposition we may meet with.

RUMMEL.

We stand or fall together, Bernick.

HILMAR.

[*Coming up from the garden.*] Excuse me, isn't it the railway that falls?

BERNICK.

On the contrary, it is to go ahead——

RUMMEL.

——full steam, Mr. Tönnesen.

HILMAR.

[*Coming forward.*] Indeed!

RÖRLUND.

What?

MRS. BERNICK.

[*At the door.*] My dear Karsten, what's the meaning——?

BERNICK.

Oh, my dear Betty, it can't possibly interest you. [*To the three men.*] Now we must get the prospectus ready; the sooner the better. Of course we four put our names down first. Our position in society renders it our duty to do as much as we can.

SANDSTAD.

No doubt, Consul.

RUMMEL

We will make it go, Bernick; we are bound to.

BERNICK.

Oh, yes; I have no fear as to the result. We must work hard, each in his own circle; and if we can once point to a really lively interest in the affair among all classes of society, it follows that the town, too, must contribute its share.

MRS. BERNICK.

Now, Karsten, you must really come and tell us——

BERNICK.

Oh, my dear Betty, ladies don't understand these things.

HILMAR.

Then you are actually going to back up the railway after all?

BERNICK.

Yes, of course.

RÖRLUND.

But last year, Consul——?

BERNICK.

Last year it was a different matter altogether. Then it was a coast line that was proposed——

VIGELAND.

——which would have been entirely superfluous, Doctor; for have we not steamboats?

SANDSTAD.

——and would have been outrageously expensive——

RUMMEL.

——yes, and would actually have interfered with important vested interests here in the town.

BERNICK.

The chief objection was that it would have conferred no benefit on the great mass of the community. Therefore I opposed it; and then the inland line was adopted.

HILMAR.

Yes, but that won't touch the towns about here.

BERNICK.

It will touch o u r town, my dear Hilmar, for we are going to build a branch line.

HILMAR.

Aha; an entirely new idea, then?

RUMMEL.

Yes; a magnificent idea, isn't it?

RÖRLUND.

H'm——

VIGELAND.

It cannot be denied that Providence seems specially to have smoothed the way for a branch line.

RÖRLUND.

Do you really say so, Mr. Vigeland?

BERNICK.

Yes, for my part, I cannot but regard it as a special guidance that sent me up country on business this spring, and led me by chance into a valley where I had never been before. It struck me like a flash of lightning that here was the very track for a branch line. I at once sent an engineer to inspect it; I have here the provisional calculations and estimates; nothing now stands in our way.

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Still standing, along with the other ladies, at the garden door.*] But, my dear Karsten, why have you kept all this so secret?

BERNICK.

Oh, my good Betty, you would not have seen the situation in its true light. Besides, I have spoken of it to no living creature until to-day. But now the decisive moment has come; now we must go to work openly, and with all our might. Ay, if I have to risk all I possess in the affair, I am determined to see it through.

RUMMEL.

So are we, Bernick; you may rely on us.

RÖRLUND.

Do you really expect such great results from this undertaking, gentlemen?

BERNICK.

Yes, indeed we do. What a stimulus it will give to our whole community! Think of the great tracks of forest it will bring within reach; think of all the rich mineral-seams it will allow us to work; think of the river, with its one waterfall above the other! What rare advantages for manufactures of all kinds!

RÖRLUND.

And you have no fear that more frequent intercourse with a depraved outer world——

BERNICK.

No; make your mind easy, Doctor. Our busy little town now rests, heaven be thanked, on a sound moral foundation; we have all helped to drain it, if I may say so; and that we will continue to do, each in his own way. You, Doctor, will carry on your beneficent activity in the school and in the home. We, the practical men of business, will support society by furthering the welfare of as wide a circle as possible. And our women—yes, come nearer, ladies; I am glad that you should hear—our women, I say, our wives and daughters, will proceed unwearied in their charitable labours, and be a help and comfort to those nearest and dearest to them, as my dear Betty and Martha are to me and Olaf—— [*Looks around.*] Why, where is Olaf to-day?

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, in the holidays it's impossible to keep him at home.

BERNICK.

Then he's certain to have gone down to the water again! You'll see, this will end in a misfortune.

HILMAR.

Bah—a little sport with the forces of nature——

MRS. RUMMEL.

How nice it is of you to be so domestic, Mr. Bernick.

BERNICK.

Ah, the Family is the kernel of society. A good home, upright and trusty friends, a little close drawn circle, where no disturbing elements cast their shadow——

KRAP *enters from the right with letters and papers.*

KRAP.

The foreign mail, Consul—and a telegram from New York.

BERNICK.

[*Taking it.*] Ah, from the owners of the *Indian Girl.*

RUMMEL.

Oh, the mail is in? Then you must excuse me——

VIGELAND.

And me too.

SANDSTAD.

Good-bye, Consul.

BERNICK.

Good-bye, good-bye, gentlemen. And remember we have a meeting this afternoon at five o'clock.

THE THREE.

Yes—of course—all right. [*They go out to the right.*

BERNICK.

[*Who has read the telegram.*] Well, this is really too American! Positively shocking——!

MRS. BERNICK.

Why, Karsten, what is it?

BERNICK.

Look here, Krap—read this!

KRAP.

[*Reads.*] "Fewest possible repairs; despatch *Indian Girl* without delay; good season: at worst, cargo will keep her afloat." Well, I must say——

BERNICK.

The cargo keep her afloat! These gentlemen know very well that, if anything should happen, that cargo will send her to the bottom like a stone.

RÖRLUND.

Ay, this shows the state of things in these vaunted great nations.

BERNICK.

You are right there—even human life counts for nothing when dollars are at stake. [*To* KRAP.] Can the *Indian Girl* be ready for sea in four or five days?

KRAP.

Yes, if Mr. Vigeland will agree to let the *Palm Tree* stand over in the meantime.

BERNICK.

H'm—he will scarcely agree to that. Oh, just look through the mail, please. By the way, did you see Olaf down on the pier?

KRAP.

No, Consul. [*He goes into Consul's office.*

BERNICK.

[*Looking again at the telegram.*] These gentlemen think nothing of risking the lives of eighteen men——

HILMAR.

Well, it's a sailor's calling to brave the elements. It must brace up your nerves to feel that you have only a thin plank between you and eternity——

BERNICK.

I should like to see the shipowner among us that would have the conscience to do such a thing! There

isn't one, not a single one. [*Catches sight of* OLAF.] Ah, thank goodness, nothing has happened to him.

[OLAF, *with a fishing-line in his hand, comes running up the street and through the garden-gate.*

OLAF.

[*Still in the garden.*] Uncle Hilmar, I've been down seeing the steamboat.

BERNICK.

Have you been on the pier again?

OLAF.

No, I was only out in a boat. But just fancy, Uncle Hilmar, a whole circus company came ashore from the steamer, with horses and wild beasts; and there were a lot of passengers besides.

MRS. RUMMEL.

Oh, are we to have a circus?

RÖRLUND.

We? Really I should hope not.

MRS. RUMMEL.

No, of course not w e, but——

DINA.

I should like to see a circus.

OLAF.

Oh, and me too!

HILMAR.

You're a little blockhead. What is there to see? Nothing but trickery and make-believe. Now it would be something worth while to see the gaucho sweeping over the Pampas on his snorting mustang. But, hang it all, here in these little towns——

OLAF.

[*Pulling* MARTHA'S *dress.*] Aunt Martha, look, look—there they come!

MRS. HOLT.

Yes indeed, here we have them.

MRS. LYNGE.

Oh, what horrid people!

[*Many travellers, and a whole crowd of townspeople, come up the street.*

MRS. HOLT.

Nor you either, Netta!

OLAF.

Oh, mother, the manager is bowing to us.

BERNICK.

What?

MRS. BERNICK.

What do you say, child?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Yes, and I declare the woman is nodding too!

BERNICK.

Come, this is really too much!

MARTHA.

[*With an involuntary cry.*] Ah——!

MRS. BERNICK.

What is it, Martha?

MARTHA.

Oh, nothing—only I thought——

OLAF.

[*Shrieks with delight.*] Look, look, there come the others, with the horses and wild beasts! And there are

the Americans too! All the sailors from the *Indian Girl*——

[*"Yankee Doodle" is heard, accompanied by a clarinet and drum.*

HILMAR.

[*Stopping his ears.*] Ugh, ugh, ugh!

RÖRLUND.

I think we should withdraw for a moment, ladies. This is no scene for us. Let us resume our work.

MRS. BERNICK.

Perhaps we ought to draw the curtains?

RÖRLUND.

Yes, that is just what I was thinking.

[*The ladies take their places at the table.* RÖRLUND

HILMAR.

Well, if I were travelling in the desert and came upon a well, I should never hesitate to—— Ugh, that abominable clarinet!

RÖRLUND.

The police ought really to interfere.

BERNICK.

Oh, come; one must not be too hard upon foreigners; these people are naturally devoid of the deep-rooted sense of propriety that keeps us within the right limits. Let them do as they please; it cannot affect u s. All this unseemliness, this rebellion against good taste and good manners, fortunately finds no echo, if I may say so, in our society.—What is this!

A STRANGE LADY *enters briskly by the door on the right.*

THE LADIES.

[*Frightened and speaking low.*] The circus woman! The manager's wife!

MRS. BERNICK.

Why, what does this mean!

MARTHA.

[*Starts up.*] Ah——!

THE LADY.

Good-morning, my dear Betty! Good-morning, Martha! Good-morning, brother-in-law!

MRS. BERNICK.

[*With a shriek.*] Lona——!

BERNICK.

[*Staggers back a step.*] Merciful heavens——!

MRS. HOLT.

Why, goodness me——!

MRS. RUMMEL.

It can't be possible——!

HILMAR.

What? Ugh!

MRS. BERNICK.

Lona——! Is it really——?

LONA.

Really me? Yes, indeed it is. You may fall on m neck and embrace me, for that matter.

HILMAR.

Ugh! ugh!

MRS. BERNICK.

And you come here as——?

BERNICK.

You are actually going to appear——?

LONA.

Appear? How appear?

BERNICK.

I mean—in the circus——?

LONA.

Ha ha ha! What nonsense, brother-in-law. Do you think I belong to the circus? No; it's true I have turned my hand to all sorts of things, and made a fool of myself in many ways——

MRS. RUMMEL.

H'm——

LONA.

——but I've never learnt to play tricks on horseback.

BERNICK.

Then you are not——?

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, thank God!

LONA.

No, no; we came like other respectable people,—second class, it's true; but we're used to that.

MRS. BERNICK.

We, you say?

BERNICK.

[*Advancing a step.*] What we?

LONA.

Why, my boy and I, of course.

THE LADIES.

[*With a cry.*] Your boy!

HILMAR.

What?

RÖRLUND.

Well, I must say——

MRS. BERNICK.

Why, what do you mean, Lona?

LONA.

Of course I mean John; I have no other boy but John, that I know of—or Johan, as you call him.

MRS. BERNICK.

Johan——!

MRS. RUMMEL.

[*Aside to* MRS. LYNGE.] The prodigal brother.

BERNICK.

[*Hesitatingly.*] Is Johan with you?

LONA.

Of course, of course; I would never travel without him. But you're all looking so dismal—and sitting here in this twilight, sewing at something white. There hasn't been a death in the family?

RÖRLUND.

This is a meeting, Miss Hessel, of the Society for the Moral Regeneration of the Lapsed and Lost.

LONA.

[*Half to herself.*] What? These nice-looking, well-behaved ladies, can t h e y be——?

MRS. RUMMEL.

Oh, this is too much——'

LONA.

Ah, I see, I see! Why, good gracious, that's Mrs. Rummel! And there sits Mrs. Holt too! Well, we three haven't grown younger since last we met. But listen now, good people: let the Lapsed and Lost wait for one day; they'll be none the worse for it. On a joyful occasion like this——

RÖRLUND.

A return home is not always a joyful occasion.

LONA.

Indeed? Then how do you read your Bible, Pastor?

RÖRLUND.

I am not a clergyman.

LONA.

Oh; then you will be one, for certain.—But, pah!—this moral linen here has a tainted smell—just like a shroud. I'm accustomed to the air of the prairies now, I can tell you.

BERNICK.

[*Wiping his forehead.*] Yes; it really is rather oppressive in here.

LONA.

Wait a moment—we'll soon rise from the sep
[*Draws back the curtains.*] We must have broa
light here when my boy comes. Ah—then you sh
a boy that has washed himself——

HILMAR.

Ugh!

LONA.

[*Opens the door and the windows.*] ——when h
washed himself, I mean—up at the hotel—for on
the steamer you get as dirty as a pig.

HILMAR.

Ugh, ugh!

LONA.

"Ugh"? Why if that isn't——! [*Points to* H
and asks the others.] Does h e still loaf about he
ing "ugh" to everything?

HILMAR.

I do not loaf; I remain here by my doctor's or

RÖRLUND.

Ahem—ladies, I hardly think that——

LONA.

[*Catches sight of* OLAF.] Is this y o u r you
Betty? Give us your fist, my boy! Or are you
of your ugly old aunt?

RÖRLUND.

[*Putting his book under his arm.*] I do not think, ladies, that we are quite in the mood for doing more work to-day. But we shall meet again to-morrow?

LONA.

[*As the visitors rise to go.*] Yes, by all means—I shall be here.

RÖRLUND.

You? Allow me to ask, Miss Hessel, what y o u will do in o u r Society?

LONA.

I will let in fresh air, Pastor.

ACT SECOND

The garden-room in CONSUL BERNICK'S *house.*

MRS. BERNICK *is sitting alone at the work-table, sewin*
In a little while CONSUL BERNICK *enters from t*
right, with his hat and gloves on, and a stick in h
hand.

MRS. BERNICK.

Are you home already, Karsten?

BERNICK.

Yes. I have an appointment here.

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Sighing.*] Oh, yes; I suppose Johan will be dow here again.

BERNICK.

No; it's with one of my men. [*Takes off his hat* Where are all the ladies to-day?

MRS. BERNICK.

Mrs. Rummel and Hilda hadn't time to come.

BERNICK.

Indeed! They have sent excuses?

MRS. BERNICK.

Yes; they had so much to do at home.

BERNICK.

Of course. And the others are not coming either, I suppose?

MRS. BERNICK.

No; something has prevented them too.

BERNICK.

I was sure it would. Where is Olaf?

MRS. BERNICK.

I allowed him to go for a walk with Dina.

BERNICK.

H'm; that scatter brained hussy, Dina——! How could she go and forthwith strike up a friendship with Johan——!

MRS. BERNICK.

Why, my dear Karsten, Dina has no idea——

BERNICK.

Well, then, Johan at least should have had tact enough to take no notice of her. I could see Vigeland's expressive glances.

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Dropping her work into her lap.*] Karsten, can you understand what has brought them home?

BERNICK

Well, he has a farm over there, that doesn't seem to be very flourishing; and she mentioned yesterday that they had to travel second-class——

MRS. BERNICK.

Yes, I was afraid it must be something of that sort. But that she should have come with him! She! After the terrible way she insulted you——!

BERNICK.

Oh, don't think of those old stories.

MRS. BERNICK.

How can I think of anything else? He is my own brother——; and yet it is not of him that I think, but of all the unpleasantness it will bring upon you. Karsten, I am so dreadfully afraid that——

BERNICK.

What are you afraid of?

MRS. BERNICK.

Might they not think of arresting him for that money your mother lost?

BERNICK.

What nonsense! Who can prove that she lost the money?

MRS. BERNICK.

Why, the whole town knows it, unfortunately; and you said yourself——

BERNICK.

I said nothing. The town knows nothing whatever of the matter; it was all idle gossip.

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, how noble you are, Karsten!

BERNICK.

Put all those old stories out of your head, I say! You don't know how you torture me by raking them up again. [*He walks up and down the room; then he throws his stick away from him.*] To think of their coming home just at this time, when so much depends on unmixed good-feeling, both in the press and in the town! There will be paragraphs in the papers all over the country-side. Whether I receive them well or ill, my action will be discussed, my motives turned inside out. People will rip up all those old stories—just as you do. In a society like ours—— [*Tosses down his gloves upon the table.*] And there isn't a soul here that I can confide in, or that can give me any support.

MRS. BERNICK.

No one at all, Karsten?

BERNICK.

No; you know there is not.—That they should descend upon me just at this moment! They are certain to make a scandal in one way or another—especially she. It is nothing less than a calamity to have such people in one's family.

MRS. BERNICK.

Well, it's not my fault that——

BERNICK.

What is not your fault? That you are related to them? No; that's true enough.

MRS. BERNICK.

And it wasn't I that asked them to come home.

BERNICK.

Aha, there we have it! "*I* didn't ask them to come home; *I* didn't write for them; *I* didn't drag them home by the hair of their heads." Oh, I know the whole story off by heart.

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Bursting into tears.*] Oh, why are you so unkind?

BERNICK.

Yes, that's right; set to crying, so that the town may have that to chatter about too. Stop this nonsense, Betty. You had better sit outside there; some one might come in. Perhaps you want people to see Madam with red eyes? It would be a nice thing indeed if it got abroad that—— Ah! I hear some one in the passage. [*A knock.*] Come in.

[MRS. BERNICK *goes out to the verandah with her work.* AUNE *comes in from the right.*

AUNE.

Good-morning, Consul.

BERNICK.

Good-morning. Well, I suppose you can guess what I want with you?

AUNE.

Your clerk told me yesterday that you were not pleased with——

BERNICK.

I am altogether displeased with the way things are going at the yard, Aune. You are not getting on at all with the repairs. The *Palm Tree* should have been at sea long ago. Mr. Vigeland comes worrying me about it every day. He is a troublesome partner.

AUNE.

The *Palm Tree* can sail the day after to-morrow.

BERNICK.

At last! But the American, the *Indian Girl*, that has been lying here five weeks, and——

AUNE.

The American? I sort of understood that we was to do all we could to get your own ship out of hand first.

BERNICK.

I have given you no reason for such an idea. You should have made all possible progress with the American too; but you have done nothing.

AUNE.

The vessel's bottom is as rotten as matchwood, Consul; the more we patch at it the worse it gets.

BERNICK.

That is not the real reason. Krap has told me the whole truth. You don't understand how to work the new machines I have introduced—or rather, you won't work with them.

AUNE.

I'm getting on in years, Consul Bernick—nigh upon sixty. From a boy I've been used to the old ways——

BERNICK.

They are quite inadequate nowadays. You mustn't think, Aune, that it's a question of mere profit; luckily I could do without that; but I must consider the community I live in, and the business I have to manage. It is from me that progress must come, or it will never come at all.

AUNE.

I have nought to say against progress, Consul.

BERNICK.

No, for your own narrow circle, for the working class. Oh, I know all about your agitations! You make speeches; you stir people up; but when it comes to a tangible piece of progress, as in the case of the machines, you will have nothing to do with it; you are afraid.

AUNE.

Yes, I'm afraid, Consul; I'm afraid for the hundreds of poor folks as the machines 'll take the bread out of their mouths. You talk a deal of duty towards Society, Consul, but it seems to me as Society has duties of its own as well. What business have science and capital to bring all these new-fangled inventions into the field before Society has turned out a breed of men that can use them?

BERNICK.

You read and think too much, Aune; it does you no good; that is what makes you dissatisfied with your position.

AUNE.

It's not that, Consul; but I can't abear to see one good workman after another packed off to starve for the sake of these machines.

BERNICK.

H'm; when printing was discovered, many copyists had to starve.

AUNE.

Would you have thought printing such a fine thing, Consul, if you'd have been a copyist?

BERNICK.

I didn't get you here to argue with you. I sent for you to tell you that the *Indian Girl* must be ready to sail the day after to-morrow.

AUNE.

Why, Consul——

BERNICK.

The day after to-morrow, do you hear? At the same time as our own ship; not an hour later. I have my reasons for hurrying on the affair. Have you read this morning's paper? Ah!—then you know that the Americans have been making disturbances again. The ruffianly crew turn the whole town topsy-turvy. Not a night passes without fights in the taverns or on the street; not to speak of other abominations.

AUNE.

Yes, they're a bad lot, for certain.

BERNICK.

And who gets the blame of all this? It is I—yes, I—that suffer for it. These wretched newspaper-men are covertly carping at us for giving our whole attention to the *Palm Tree*. And I, whose mission it is to set an example to my fellow citizens, must have such things thrown in my teeth! I won't bear it. I cannot have my name bespattered in this way.

AUNE.

Oh, the name of Bernick is good enough to bear that, and more.

BERNICK.

Not just now; precisely at this moment I need all the respect and goodwill of my fellow citizens. I have a great undertaking in hand, as you have probably heard; and if evil-disposed persons should succeed in shaking people's unqualified confidence in me, it may involve me in the

most serious difficulties. I must silence these carping and spiteful scribblers at any cost; and that is why I give you till the day after to-morrow.

AUNE.

You might just as well give me till this afternoon, Consul Bernick.

BERNICK.

You mean that I am demanding impossibilities?

AUNE.

Yes, with the present working staff——

BERNICK.

Oh, very well;—then we must look about us elsewhere.

AUNE.

Would you really turn off still more of the old workmen?

BERNICK.

No, that is not what I am thinking of.

AUNE.

I m certain sure, if you did, there would be a fine to-do both in the town and in the newspapers.

BERNICK.

Very possibly; therefore I won't do it. But if the *Indian Girl* is not cleared the day after to-morrow, I shall dismiss y o u.

AUNE.

[*With a start.*] Me! [*Laughing.*] Oh, that's only your joke, Consul.

BERNICK.

I advise you not to trust to that.

AUNE.

You can think of turning m e away! Why, my father before me, and h i s father too, worked in the shipyard all their lives; and I myself——

BERNICK.

Who forces me to it?

AUNE.

You want me to do things as can't be done, Consul.

BERNICK.

Oh, where there's a will there's a way. Yes or no? Answer me definitely, or I dismiss you on the spot.

AUNE.

[*Coming nearer.*] Consul Bernick, have you rightly bethought what it means to turn an old workman away? You say he can look about for another job. Ay, ay, maybe he can—but is that everything? Ah, you should just see what it looks like in a turned-off workman's house, the night when he comes home and puts his tool-chest behind the door.

BERNICK.

Do you think I part with you willingly? Haven't I always been a good master to you?

AUNE.

So much the worse, Consul; for that means as my folks at home won't put the blame on y o u. They won't say nothing to me, for they durstn't; but they'll look at me when I'm not noticing, as much as to say: Certain sure, it must 'a' been his fault. You see, it's that—it's that as I can't abear. God knows, I'm a poor man, but I've always been used to be the first in my own house. My bit of a home is in a manner of speaking a little community, Consul Bernick. That little community I've been able to support and hold together because my wife believed in me, my children believed in me. And now the whole thing is to fall to pieces.

BERNICK.

Well, if it cannot be otherwise, the less must fall before the greater; the part must, in heaven's name, be sacrificed to the whole. I can give you no other answer; and you'll find it is the way of the world. But you are an obstinate fellow, Aune! You stand against me, not because you can't help it, but because you w i l l not prove the superiority of machinery to manual labor.

AUNE.

And you're so dead set on this, Consul, because you know that, if you send me about my business, leastways you'll have shown the papers your goodwill.

BERNICK.

What if it were so? I have told you how much it means to me—I must either conciliate the papers, or have them all attacking me at the moment when I am working for a great and beneficent cause. What follows? Can I possibly act otherwise than I am doing? Would you have me, in order to hold your home together, as you call it, sacrifice hundreds of other homes—homes that will never be founded, will never have a smoking hearth-stone, if I do not succeed in my present enterprise? You must make your choice.

AUNE.

Well, if you put it that way, I've got no more to say.

BERNICK.

H'm—; my dear Aune, I am truly sorry we must part.

AUNE.

We will n o t part, Consul Bernick.

BERNICK.

What?

AUNE.

Even a common man has his rights to stand up for here in the world

BERNICK.

Of course, of course. Then you can promise——?

AUNE.

The *Indian Girl* shall be ready for sea the day after to-morrow. [*He bows and goes out to the right.*

BERNICK.

Aha, I've made t h a t stiff neck bend. I take that as a good omen——

HILMAR TÖNNESEN, *with a cigar in his mouth, comes through the garden gate.*

HILMAR.

[*On the verandah steps.*] Good-morning, Betty! Good-morning, Bernick!

MRS. BERNICK.

Good-morning.

HILMAR.

Oh, you've been crying, I see. Then you've heard?

MRS. BERNICK.

Heard what?

HILMAR.

That the scandal is in full swing! Ugh!

BERNICK.

What do you mean?

HILMAR.

[*Coming into the room.*] Why, that the two Americans are flaunting about the streets in company with Dina Dorf.

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Also coming in.*] Oh, Hilmar, is it possible——?

HILMAR.

I can bear witness, worse luck! Lona had even the want of tact to call out to me; but I naturally pretended not to hear her.

BERNICK.

And of course all this has not passed unnoticed.

HILMAR.

No; you may be sure it hasn't. People turned round and looked after them. It ran like wildfire over the town—like a fire on the Western prairies. There were people at the windows of all the houses, head to head behind the curtains, waiting for the procession to pass. Ugh! You must excuse me, Betty; I say ugh! for it makes me so nervous. If this goes on I shall have to go for a change of air somewhere, pretty far off.

MRS. BERNICK.

But you should have spoken to him, and pointed out——

HILMAR.

In the public street? No; I beg to be excused. But how the deuce can the fellow dare to show himself here! Well, we shall see if the papers don't put a stopper on him. I beg your pardon, Betty, but——

BERNICK.

The papers, you say? Have you heard anything to make you think so?

HILMAR.

I should rather say I had! When I left here last night, I took my constitutional up to the club. I could tell from the sudden silence when I came in that they had been discussing the two Americans. And then in came that impertinent editor-fellow, Hammer, or whatever they call him, and congratulated me, before everybody, upon my rich cousin's return.

BERNICK.

Rich——?

HILMAR.

Yes; that was what he said. Of course I measured him from top to toe with the contempt he deserved, and gave him to understand that I knew nothing of Johan Tönnesen being rich. "Indeed!" says he; "that's strange. In America people generally get on when they have something to start with, and we know your cousin didn't go over empty-handed."

BERNICK.

H'm, be so good as to——

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Troubled.*] There, you see, Karsten——

HILMAR.

Well, at any rate, not a wink have I slept for thinking of the fellow. And there he goes calmly marching about the streets, as if he had nothing to be ashamed of. Why couldn't he have been disposed of for good? Some people are intolerably tough.

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, Hilmar, what are you saying?

HILMAR.

Oh, nothing, nothing. Only here he escapes safe and sound from railway accidents, and fights with Californian bears and Blackfoot Indians; why, he's not even scalped—— Ugh! here they are.

BERNICK.

[*Looks down the street.*] Olaf with them too.

HILMAR.

Yes, of course; catch them letting people forget that they belong to the first family in the town. Look, look, there come all the loafers out of the drug-store to stare at them and make remarks. Really, this is too much for my nerves; how a man under such circumstances is to hold high the banner of the ideal——

BERNICK.

They are coming straight here. Listen, Betty: it is my decided wish that you should be as friendly as possible to them.

MRS. BERNICK.

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, Karsten, how noble you are.

BERNICK.

No, no, nothing of the sort.

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, but you must let me thank you; and forgive me for being so hasty. You had every reason to——

BERNICK.

Don't talk of it, don't talk of it, I say.

HILMAR.

Ugh!

JOHAN TÖNNESEN *and* DINA, *followed by* LONA *and* OLAF, *come through the garden.*

LONA.

Good-morning, good-morning, my dear people.

JOHAN.

We have been out looking all round the old place, Karsten.

BERNICK.

Yes, so I hear. Greatly changed, is it not?

LONA.

Consul Bernick's great and good works on every hand. We've been up in the gardens you have presented to the town——

BERNICK.

Oh, there!

LONA.

"Karsten Bernick's Gift," as the inscription over the entrance says. Yes; everything here seems to be your work.

JOHAN.

And you have splendid ships too. I met my old school-fellow, the captain of the *Palm Tree*——

LONA.

Yes, and you've built a new school-house; and they owe both the gas and the water-works to you, I hear.

BERNICK.

Oh, one must work for the community one lives in.

LONA.

Well, you've done your part finely, brother-in-law; but it's a pleasure, too, to see how people appreciate you. I don't think I'm vain, but I couldn't help reminding one or two of the people we talked to that we belong to the family.

HILMAR.

Ugh——!

LONA.

Do you say "Ugh!" to that?

HILMAR.

No, I said "H'm"——

LONA.

Oh, was that all, poor fellow? But you are quite alone here to-day!

MRS. BERNICK.

Yes, to-day we are quite alone.

LONA.

By-the-bye, we met one or two of the Moral Regenerators up in the market-place; they seemed to be very busy. But we have never had a proper talk yet; yesterday we had the three pioneers of progress here, and the Pastor too——

HILMAR.

The Doctor.

LONA.

I call him the Pastor. But now—what do you think of my work for these fifteen years? Hasn't he grown a fine boy? Who would recognise him now for the scapegrace that ran away from home?

HILMAR.

H'm——

JOHAN.

Oh, Lona, don't boast too much.

LONA.

I don't care, I'm really proud of it. Well, well, it's the only thing I have done in the world, but it gives me a sort of right to exist. Yes, Johan, when I think how we two began life over there with only our four bare paws——

HILMAR.

Hands.

LONA.

I say paws, they were so dirty——

HILMAR.

Ugh!

LONA.

——and empty too.

HILMAR

Empty! Well, I must say!

LONA.

What must you say?

BERNICK.

H'm!

HILMAR.

I must say—ugh! [*Goes out upon the verandah.*

LONA.

Why, what's wrong with the man?

BERNICK.

Oh, never mind him; he's rather nervous just now. Should you like to take a look round the garden? You haven't been down there yet, and I happen to have an hour to spare.

LONA.

Yes, I should like it very much; you may be sure my thoughts have often been with you all, here in the garden.

MRS. BERNICK.

There have been great changes there too, as you'll see.

[CONSUL BERNICK, MRS. BERNICK, *and* LONA *go down the garden, where they are now and then visible during the following scene.*

OLAF.

[*At the garden door.*] Uncle Hilmar, do you know what Uncle Johan asked me? He asked if I'd like to go with him to America.

HILMAR.

You, you little muff, that go about tied to your mother's apron-strings——

OLAF.

Yes, but I won't be so any more. You shall see when I'm big——

HILMAR.

Oh, rubbish; you have no real craving for the discipline of danger——

[*They go down the garden together.*

JOHAN.

[*To* DINA, *who has taken off her hat, and stands at the door to the right, shaking the dust from her dress.*] The walk has made you very warm.

DINA.

Yes; it was splendid. I have never had such a nice walk before.

JOHAN.

Perhaps you don't often go for a walk in the morning?

DINA.

Oh, yes; but only with Olaf.

JOHAN.

Ah!—Should you like to go down the garden, or to stay here?

DINA.

I would rather stay here.

JOHAN.

And I too. Then it's settled that we go for a walk together every morning?

DINA.

No, Mr. Tönnesen, you mustn't do that.

JOHAN.

Why not? You know you promised.

DINA.

Yes, but on thinking it over, I—— You mustn't go about with me.

JOHAN.

Why on earth should I not?

DINA.

Ah, you are a stranger here; you don't understand; but I must tell you——

JOHAN.

Well?

DINA.

No, I would rather not speak about it.

JOHAN.

Oh, yes—surely you can speak to me about anything you wish to.

DINA.

Then I must tell you that I am not like the other girls here; there is something—something about me. That is why you mustn't walk with me.

JOHAN.

But I don't understand a word of this. You haven't done anything wrong?

DINA.

No, not I, but——; no, I won't say anything more about it. You are sure to hear it from the others.

JOHAN.

H'm——

DINA.

But there was something else I wanted to ask you about.

JOHAN.

And what was that?

DINA.

Is it really so easy to lead a life that is worth living in America?

JOHAN.

Well, it isn't always easy; you have generally rough it a good deal, and work hard, to begin with.

DINA.

I would willingly do that.

JOHAN.

You?

DINA.

I can work well enough; I am strong and healthy, Aunt Martha has taught me a great deal.

JOHAN.

Then, hang it all, why not come with us?

DINA.

Oh, now you are only joking; you said the sam Olaf. But I wanted to know, too, if people over t are very—very moral, you know?

JOHAN.

Moral?

DINA.

Yes, I mean, are they as—as proper and well-beh as they are here?

JOHAN.

Well, at any rate, they are not so bad as people here think. Don't be at all afraid of that.

DINA.

You don't understand. What I want is just that they should n o t be so very proper and moral.

JOHAN.

Indeed? What would you have them then?

DINA.

I would have them natural.

JOHAN.

Well, that is perhaps just what they are.

DINA.

Then that would be the place for me.

JOHAN.

Yes, I am sure it would; so you must come with us.

DINA.

No, I wouldn't go with you; I should have to go alone. Oh, I should get on; I should soon be fit for something——

BERNICK.

[*At the foot of the verandah steps with the two ladies.*] Stay here, stay here; I'll fetch it, my dear Betty. You might easily catch cold.

[*Comes into the room and looks for his wife's shawl.*

MRS. BERNICK.

[*From the garden.*] You must come too, Johan; we are going down to the grotto.

BERNICK.

No, Johan must stay here just now. Here, Dina; take my wife's shawl and go with them. Johan will stay here with me, my dear Betty. I want him to tell me a little about things in America.

MRS. BERNICK.

Very well; then come after us; you know where to find us.

[MRS. BERNICK, LONA, *and* DINA *go down through the garden to the left.*

BERNICK.

[*Looks out after them for a moment, goes and shuts the second door on the left, then goes up to* JOHAN, *seizes both his hands, shakes them, and presses them warmly.*] Johan, now we are alone; now you must give me leave to thank you.

JOHAN.

Oh, nonsense!

BERNICK.

My house and home, my domestic happiness, my whole position in society—all these I owe to you.

JOHAN.

Well, I am glad of it, my dear Karsten; so some good came of that foolish story after all.

BERNICK.

[*Shaking his hands again.*] Thanks, thanks, all the same! Not one in ten thousand would have done what you did for me then.

JOHAN.

Oh, nonsense! Were we not both of us young and a bit reckless? One of us had to take the blame upon him: ——

BERNICK.

Yes, and the guilty one was the obvious person.

JOHAN.

Stop! Then the obvious person was the innocent one. I was alone, free, an orphan; it was a positive blessing to me to escape from the grind of the office. You, on the other hand, had your mother still living; and, besides, you had just got secretly engaged to Betty, and she was devoted to you. What would have become of her if she had learnt——?

BERNICK.

True, true, true; but——

JOHAN.

And was it not just for Betty's sake that you broke off the entanglement with Madam Dorf? It was for the very purpose of putting an end to it that you were up at her house that night——

BERNICK.

Yes, the fatal night when that drunken brute came home——! Yes, Johan, it was for Betty's sake; but yet

—that you should have the generosity to turn appearances against yourself and go away——

JOHAN.

You need have no qualms, my dear Karsten. We agreed that it should be so; you had to be saved, and you were my friend. I can tell you I was proud of that friendship! Here was I, poor stay-at-home, plodding along, when you came back like a very prince from your great foreign tour—from London and Paris, no less! Then what should you do but choose me for your bosom friend, though I was four years younger than you. Well, that was because you were making love to Betty; now I understand it well enough. But how proud I was of it then! And who would not have been proud! Who would not gladly have served as your scapegoat, especially when it only meant a month's town-talk, and an excuse for making a dash into the wide world.

BERNICK.

H'm—my dear Johan, I must tell you frankly that the story is not so entirely forgotten yet.

JOHAN.

Isn't it? Well, what does it matter to me when once I am back again at my farm?

BERNICK.

Then you are going back?

JOHAN.

Of course.

BERNICK.

But not so very soon, I hope?

JOHAN.

As soon as possible. It was only to please Lona that I came over at all.

BERNICK.

Indeed! How so?

JOHAN.

Well, you see, Lona is not so young as she once was, and for some time past a sort of home-sickness has come over her, though she would never admit it. [*Smiling.*] She dared not leave behind her a scapegrace like me, who, before I was out of my teens, had been mixed up in——

BERNICK.

And then?

JOHAN.

Well, Karsten, now I must make a confession I am really ashamed of.

BERNICK.

You haven't told her the whole story?

JOHAN.

Yes, I have. It was wrong of me, but I couldn't help it. You have no conception what Lona has been to me. You could never endure her; but to me she has been a mother. The first few years over there, when we were

desperately poor—oh, how she worked! And when I had a long illness, and could earn nothing, and couldn't keep her from doing it, she took to singing songs in the cafés; gave lectures that people laughed at; wrote a book she has both laughed and cried over since—and all to keep my soul and body together. Last winter, when I saw her pining for home, and thought how she had toiled and slaved for me, could I sit still and look on? No, Karsten, I couldn't. I said, "Go, go, Lona; don't be anxious on my account. I'm not such a ne'er-do-well as you think." And then—then I told her everything.

BERNICK.

And how did she take it?

JOHAN.

Oh, she said what was quite true—that as I was innocent I could have no objection to taking a trip over here myself. But you needn't be afraid; Lona will say nothing, and I shall take better care of my own tongue another time.

BERNICK.

Yes, yes; I am sure you will.

JOHAN.

Here is my hand upon it. And now don't let us talk any more of that old story; fortunately it is the only escapade either you or I have been mixed up in, I hope. And now I mean thoroughly to enjoy the few days I shall have here. You can't think what a splendid walk we have had this forenoon. Who could have imagined that the little baggage that used to trot about and play

angels in the theatre——! But tell me—what became of her parents afterwards?

BERNICK.

Oh, there's nothing to tell except what I wrote you immediately after you left. You got my two letters, of course?

JOHAN.

Of course, of course; I have them both. The drunken scoundrel deserted her?

BERNICK.

And was afterwards killed in a drinking bout.

JOHAN.

And she herself died soon after? I suppose you did all you could for her without exciting attention?

BERNICK.

She was proud; she betrayed nothing, but she would accept nothing.

JOHAN.

Well, at any rate, you did right in taking Dina into your house.

BERNICK.

Oh, yes—— However, it was really Martha that arranged that.

JOHAN.

Ah, it was Martha? By-the-bye, where is Martha to-day?

BERNICK.

Oh, she is always busy either at the school, or among her sick people.

JOHAN.

Then it was Martha that took charge of Dina?

BERNICK.

Yes; education has always been Martha's hobby. That is why she accepted a place in the national school. It was a piece of folly on her part.

JOHAN.

She certainly looked very much done up yesterday. I should scarcely think her health would stand it.

BERNICK.

Oh, I don't think there's much amiss with her health. But it's unpleasant for me. It looks as if I, her brother, were not willing to maintain her.

JOHAN.

Maintain her? I thought she had enough of her own to——

BERNICK.

Not a halfpenny. I daresay you remember what difficulties my mother was in when you left. She got on for some time with my help; but of course that arrangement could not permanently satisfy me. So I determined to go into partnership with her; but even then things were far from going well. At last I had to take over the

whole affair; and when we came to make up accounts, there was scarcely anything left to my mother's share. Then, shortly afterwards, she died; and Martha, of course, was left with nothing.

JOHAN.

Poor Martha!

BERNICK.

Poor! Why so? You don't suppose I let her want for anything? Oh no; I think I may say I am a good brother to her. Of course she lives here and has her meals with us; her salary as a teacher is quite enough for her dress, and—what can a single woman want more?

JOHAN.

H'm; that's not the way we think in America.

BERNICK.

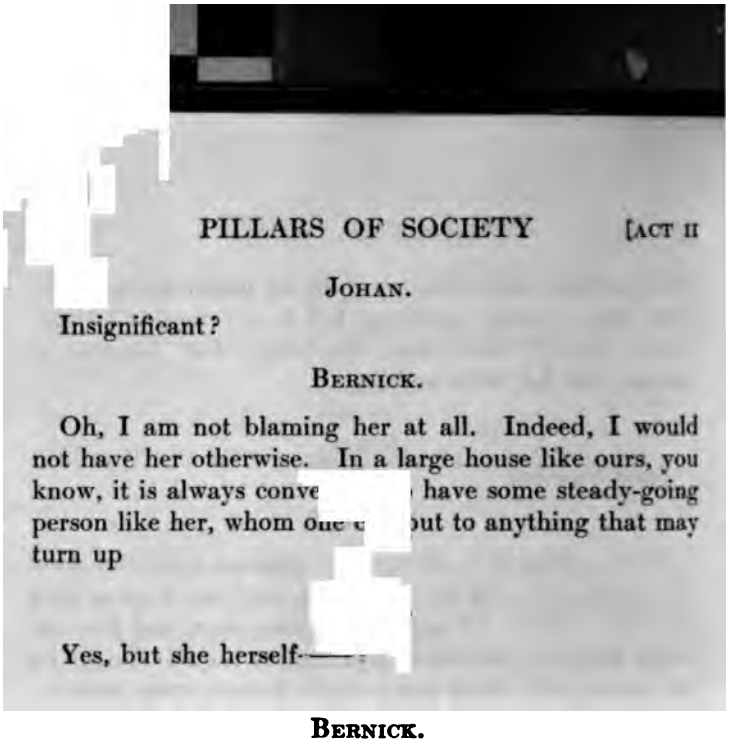
No, I daresay not; there are too many agitators at work over there. But here, in our little circle, where, thank heaven, corruption has not as yet managed to creep in—here women are content with a modest and unobtrusive position. For the rest, it is Martha's own fault; she could have been provided for long ago if she had cared to.

JOHAN.

You mean she could have married?

BERNICK.

Yes, and married very well too; she has had several good offers. Strangely enough! — a woman without money, no longer young, and quite insignificant.



JOHAN.

Insignificant?

BERNICK.

Oh, I am not blaming her at all. Indeed, I would not have her otherwise. In a large house like ours, you know, it is always conve[illegible] have some steady-going person like her, whom one c[illegible]ut to anything that may turn up

Yes, but she herself——

BERNICK.

She herself? What do you mean? Oh, of course she has plenty to interest herself in—Betty, and Olaf, and me, you know. People ought not to think of themselves first; women least of all. We have each our community, great or small, to support and work for. I do so, at any rate. [*Pointing to* KRAP, *who enters from the right.*] See, here you have an instance. Do you think it is my own business I am occupied with? By no means. [*Quickly to* KRAP.] Well?

KRAP.

[*Whispers, showing him a bundle of papers.*] All the arrangements for the purchase are complete.

BERNICK.

Capital! excellent!—Oh, Johan, you must excuse me for a moment. [*Low, and with a pressure of the hand.*]

Thanks, thanks, Johan; and be sure that anything I can do to serve you—you understand—— Come, Mr. Krap!

[*They go into the Consul's office.*

JOHAN.

[*Looks after him for some time.*] H'm——!

[*He turns to go down the garden. At the same moment* MARTHA *enters from the right with a little basket on her arm.*

JOHAN.

Ah, Martha!

MARTHA.

Oh—Johan—is that you?

JOHAN.

Have you been out so early too?

MARTHA.

Yes. Wait a little; the others will be here soon.

[*Turns to go out to the left.*

JOHAN.

Tell me, Martha—why are you always in such a hurry?

MARTHA.

I?

JOHAN.

Yesterday you seemed to keep out of my way, so that could not get a word with you; and to-day——

MARTHA.

Yes, but——

JOHAN.

Before, we were always together—we two old playfellows.

THA.

Ah, Johan, that is m any years ago.

JOHAN.

Why, bless me, it's ears ago, neither more nor less. Perhaps you think ave changed a great deal?

MARTHA.

You? Oh yes, you too, although——

JOHAN.

What do you mean?

MARTHA.

Oh, nothing.

JOHAN.

You don't seem overjoyed to see me again.

MARTHA.

I have waited so long, Johan—too long.

JOHAN.

Waited? For me to come?

MARTHA.

Yes.

JOHAN.

And why did you think I would come?

MARTHA.

To expiate where you had sinned.

JOHAN.

I?

MARTHA.

Have you forgotten that a woman died in shame and need for your sake? Have you forgotten that by your fault a young girl's best years have been embittered?

JOHAN.

And y o u say this to me? Martha, has your brother never——?

MARTHA.

What of him?

JOHAN.

Has he never——? Oh, I mean has he never said so much as a word in my defence?

MARTHA.

Ah, Johan, you know Karsten's strict principles.

JOHAN.

H'm—of course, of course—yes, I know my old friend Karsten's strict principles.—But this is——! Well, well —I have just been talking to him. It seems to me he has changed a good deal.

MARTHA.

How can you say so? Karsten has always been an excellent man.

JOHAN.

That was not exactly what I meant; but let that pass. —H'm; now I understand the light you have seen me in; it is the prodigal's return that you have been waiting for.

MARTHA.

Listen, Johan, and I will tell you in what light I have seen you. [*Points down to the garden.*] Do you see that girl playing on the lawn with Olaf? That is Dina. Do you remember that confused letter you wrote me when you went away? You asked me to believe in you. I h a v e believed in you, Johan. All the bad things that there were rumours of afterwards must have been done in desperation, without thought, without purpose——

JOHAN.

What do you mean?

MARTHA.

Oh, you understand me well enough; no more of that. But you had to go away—to begin afresh—a new life. See, Johan, I have stood in your place here, I, your old playfellow. The duties you forgot, or could not fulfil, I have fulfilled for you. I tell you this, that you may have the less to reproach yourself with. I have been a mother to that much-wronged child; I have brought her up as well as I could——

JOHAN.

And thrown away your whole life in doing so!

MARTHA.

It has not been thrown away. But you have been long of coming, Johan.

JOHAN.

Martha—if I could say to you—— Well, at all events let me thank you for your faithful friendship.

MARTHA.

[*Smiling sadly.*] Ah——! Well, now we have made a clean breast of things, Johan. Hush, here comes some one. Good-bye; I don't want them to——

[*She goes out through the second door on the left.* LONA HESSEL *comes from the garden, followed by* MRS. BERNICK.

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Still in the garden.*] Good heavens, Lona, what can you be thinking of?

LONA.

Let me alone, I tell you; I must and will talk to him.

MRS. BERNICK.

Think what a frightful scandal it would be! Ah, Johan, are you still here?

LONA.

Out with you, boy; don't hang about indoors in the fifty rooms; go down the garden and talk to Dina.

JOHAN.

Just what I was thinking of doing.

MRS. BERNICK.

But——

LONA.

Listen, Johan; have you ever really looked at D

JOHAN.

Yes; I should think I had.

LONA.

Well, you should look at her to some purpose. the very thing for you.

MRS. BERNICK.

But, Lona——!

JOHAN.

The thing for me?

LONA.

Yes, to look at, I mean. Now go!

JOHAN.

Yes, yes; I don't need any driving.

[*He goes down the g*

MRS. BERNICK.

Lona, you amaze me. You cannot possibly earnest.

LONA.

Yes, indeed I am. Isn't she fresh, and sound, and true? She's just the wife for John. She's the sort of companion he needs over there; a different thing from an old step-sister.

MRS. BERNICK.

Dina! Dina Dorf! Just think——!

LONA.

I think first and foremost of the boy's happiness. Help him I must and will; he needs a little help in such matters; he has never had much of an eye for women.

MRS. BERNICK.

He? Johan! Surely we have sad cause to know that——

LONA.

Oh, deuce take that foolish old story? Where is Bernick? I want to speak to him.

MRS. BERNICK.

Lona, you shall not do it, I tell you!

LONA.

I shall do it. If the boy likes her, and she him, why then they shall make a match of it. Bernick is such a clever man; he must manage the thing——

MRS. BERNICK.

And you think that these American infamies will be tolerated here——

LONA.

Nonsense, Betty——

MRS. BERNICK.

——that a man like Karsten, with his strict moral ideas——

LONA.

Oh, come now, surely they're not so tremendously strict as all that.

MRS. BERNICK.

What do you dare to say?

LONA.

I dare to say that I don't believe Karsten Bernick is so very much more moral than other men.

MRS. BERNICK.

Do you still hate him, then, so bitterly? What can you want here, since you have never been able to forget that——? I can't understand how you dare look him in the face, after the shameful way you insulted him.

LONA.

Yes, Betty, I forgot myself terribly that time.

MRS. BERNICK.

And how nobly he has forgiven you—he, who had done no wrong? For he couldn't help your foolish fancies. But since that time you have hated me too. [*Bursts into tears.*] You have always envied me my hap-

piness. And now you come here to heap this trouble upon me—to show the town what sort of a family I have brought Karsten into. Yes; it is I that have to suffer for it all; and that's just what you want. Oh, it's hateful of you!

[*She goes out crying, by the second door on the left.*

LONA.

[*Looking after her.*] Poor Betty!

[CONSUL BERNICK *comes out of his office.*

BERNICK.

[*Still at the door.*] Yes, yes; that's all right, Krap—that's excellent. Send four hundred crowns for a dinner to the poor. [*Turns.*] Lona? [*Advancing.*] You are alone? Is not Betty here?

LONA.

No. Shall I call her?

BERNICK.

No, no; please don't! Oh, Lona, you don't know how I have been burning to talk openly with you—to beg for your forgiveness.

LONA.

Now listen, Karsten: don't let us get sentimental. It doesn't suit us.

BERNICK.

You m u s t hear me, Lona. I know very well how much appearances are against me, since you have heard

all about Dina's mother. But I swear to you it was only a momentary aberration; at one time I really, truly, and honestly loved you.

LONA.

What do you think has brought me home just now?

BERNICK.

Whatever you have in mind, I implore you to do nothing before I have justified myself. I can do it, Lona; at least I can show that I was not altogether to blame.

LONA.

Now you are frightened.—You once loved me, you say? Yes, you assured me so, often enough, in your letters; and perhaps it was true, too—after a fashion—so long as you were living out there in a great, free world, that gave you courage to think freely and greatly yourself. Perhaps you found in me a little more character, and will, and independence than in most people at home here. And then it was a secret between us two; no one could make fun of your bad taste.

BERNICK.

Lona, how can you think——?

LONA.

But when you came home; when you saw the ridicule that poured down upon me; when you heard the laughter at what were called my eccentricities——

BERNICK.

You w e r e inconsiderate in those days.

LONA.

Mainly for the sake of annoying the prudes, both in trousers and petticoats, that infested the town. And then you fell in with that fascinating young actress——

BERNICK.

The whole thing was a piece of folly—nothing more. I swear to you, not a tithe of the scandal and tittletattle was true.

LONA.

Perhaps not; but then Betty came home—young, beautiful, idolised by every one—and when it became known that she was to have all our aunt's money, and I nothing——

BERNICK.

Yes, here we are at the root of the matter, Lona; and now you shall hear the plain truth. I did not love Betty then; it was for no new fancy that I broke with you. It was entirely for the sake of the money; I was forced to do it; I had to make sure of the money.

LONA.

And you tell me this to my face!

BERNICK.

Yes, I do. Hear me, Lona——

LONA.

And yet you wrote me that an irresistible passion for Betty had seized you, appealed to my magnanimity, con-

jured me for Betty's sake to say nothing of what had passed between us——

BERNICK.

I had to, I tell you.

LONA.

Now, by all that's holy, I am not sorry I forgot myself as I did that day.

BERNICK.

Let me tell you, calmly and deliberately, what my position was at that time. My mother, you know, stood at the head of the business; but she had no business capacity. I was hurriedly called home from Paris; the times were critical; I was to retrieve the situation. What did I find? I found—and this, remember, had to be kept strictly secret—a house as good as ruined. Yes, it was as good as ruined, the old, respected house, that had stood through three generations. What could I, the son, the only son, do, but cast about me for a means of saving it?

LONA.

So you saved the house of Bernick at the expense of a woman.

BERNICK.

You know very well that Betty loved me.

LONA.

But I?

BERNICK.

Believe me, Lona, you would never have been happy with me.

LONA.

Was it your care for my happiness that made you play me false?

BERNICK.

Do you think it was from selfish motives that I acted as I did? If I had stood alone then, I would have begun the world again, bravely and cheerfully. But you don't understand how the head of a great house becomes a living part of the business he inherits, with its enormous responsibility. Do you know that the welfare of hundreds, ay of thousands, depends upon him? Can you not consider that it would have been nothing short of a disaster to the whole community, which both you and I call our home, if the house of Bernick had fallen?

LONA.

Is it for the sake of the community, then, that for these fifteen years you have stood upon a lie?

BERNICK.

A lie?

LONA.

How much does Betty know of all that lay beneath and before her marriage with you?

BERNICK.

Can you think that I would wound her to no purpose by telling her these things?

LONA.

To no purpose, you say? Well, well, you are a business man; you should understand what is to the purpose.

—But listen, Karsten: I, too, will speak calmly and deliberately. Tell me—after all, are you really happy?

BERNICK.

In my family, do you mean?

LONA.

Of course.

BERNICK.

I am indeed, Lona. Oh, you have not sacrificed yourself in vain. I can say truly that I have grown happier year by year. Betty is so good and docile. In the course of years she has learnt to mould her character to what is peculiar in mine——

LONA.

H'm.

BERNICK.

At first, it is true, she had some high-flown notions about love; she could not reconcile herself to the thought that, little by little, it must pass over into a placid friendship.

LONA.

But she is quite reconciled to that now?

BERNICK.

Entirely. You may guess that daily intercourse with me has not been without a ripening influence upon her. People must learn to moderate their mutual claims if they are to fulfil their duties in the community in which

they are placed. Betty has by degrees come to understand this, so that our house is now a model for our fellow citizens.

LONA.

But these fellow citizens know nothing of the lie?

BERNICK.

Of the lie?

LONA.

Yes, of the lie upon which you have stood for these fifteen years.

BERNICK.

You call that——?

LONA.

I call it the lie—the threefold lie. First the lie towards me; then the lie towards Betty; then the lie towards Johan.

BERNICK.

Betty has never asked me to speak.

LONA.

Because she has known nothing.

BERNICK.

And y o u will not ask me to;—out of consideration for her, you will not.

LONA.

Oh, no; I daresay I shall manage to bear all the ridicule; I have a broad back.

BERNICK.

And Johan will not ask me either—he has promised me that.

LONA.

But you yourself, Karsten? Is there not something within you that longs to get clear of the lie?

BERNICK.

You would have me voluntarily sacrifice my domestic happiness and my position in society!

LONA.

What right have you to stand where you are standing?

BERNICK.

For fifteen years I have every day earned a clearer right—by my whole life, by all I have laboured for, by all I have achieved.

LONA.

Yes, you have laboured for much and achieved much, both for yourself and others. You are the richest and most influential man in the town; they have to bow before your will, all of them, because you are held to be a man without stain or flaw—your home is a model, your life is a model. But all this magnificence, and you yourself along with it, stand on a trembling quicksand. A moment may come, a word may be spoken—and, if you do not save yourself in time, you and all your grandeur go to the bottom.

BERNICK.

Lona—what did you come here to do?

LONA.

To help you to get firm ground under your feet, Karsten.

BERNICK.

Revenge! You want to revenge yourself. I thought as much! But you will not succeed! There is only one who has a right to speak, and he is silent.

LONA.

Johan?

BERNICK.

Yes, Johan. If any one else accuses me, I shall deny everything. If you try to crush me, I shall fight for my life. You will never succeed, I tell you! He who could destroy me will not speak—and he is going away again.

RUMMEL *and* VIGELAND *enter from the right.*

RUMMEL.

Good-morning, good-morning, my dear Bernick. You are coming with us to the Trade Council? We have a meeting on the railway business, you know.

BERNICK.

I cannot. It's impossible just now.

VIGELAND.

You really must, Consul——

RUMMEL.

You must, Bernick. There are people working against us. Hammer and the other men who were in favour of the coast line declare that there are private interests lurking behind the new proposal.

BERNICK.

Why, then, explain to them——

VIGELAND.

It's no good o u r explaining to them, Consul——

RUMMEL.

No, no, you must come yourself. Of course no one will dare to suspect y o u of anything of that sort.

LONA.

No, I should think not.

RÖRLUND.

I must ask you a question, Consul Bernick. Is it with your consent that the young girl who has found an asylum under your roof shows herself in the public streets in company with a person whom——

LONA.

What person, Pastor?

RÖRLUND.

With the person from whom, of all others in the world, she should be kept furthest apart.

LONA.

Ho-ho!

RÖRLUND.

Is it with your consent, Consul?

BERNICK.

I know nothing about it. [*Looking for his hat and gloves.*] Excuse me; I am in a hurry; I am going up to the Trade Council.

HILMAR.

[*Enters from the garden and goes over to the second door to the left.*] Betty, Betty, come here!

MRS. BERNICK.

[*In the doorway.*] What is it?

HILMAR.

You must go down the garden and put a stop to the flirtation a certain person is carrying on with Miss Dina Dorf. It has made me quite nervous to listen to it.

LONA.

Indeed? What did the person say?

HILMAR.

Oh, only that he wants her to go with him to America. Ugh!

RÖRLUND.

Can such things be possible!

MRS. BERNICK.

What do you say?

LONA.

Why, that would be capital.

BERNICK.

Impossible! You must have misunderstood him.

HILMAR.

Then ask him himself. Here come the couple. Only don't drag me into the business.

BERNICK.

[*To* RUMMEL *and* VIGELAND.] I shall follow you—in a moment——

[RUMMEL *and* VIGELAND *go out to the right.* JOHAN TÖNNESEN *and* DINA *come in from the garden.*

JOHAN.

Hurrah, Lona, she's coming with us!

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, Johan—how can you!

RÖRLUND.

Can this be true? Such a crying scandal? By what vile arts have you——?

JOHAN.

What, what, man? What are you saying?

RÖRLUND.

Answer me, Dina; is this your intention?—deliberately formed, and of your own free will?

DINA.

I m u s t get away from here.

RÖRLUND.

But with h i m—with h i m!

DINA.

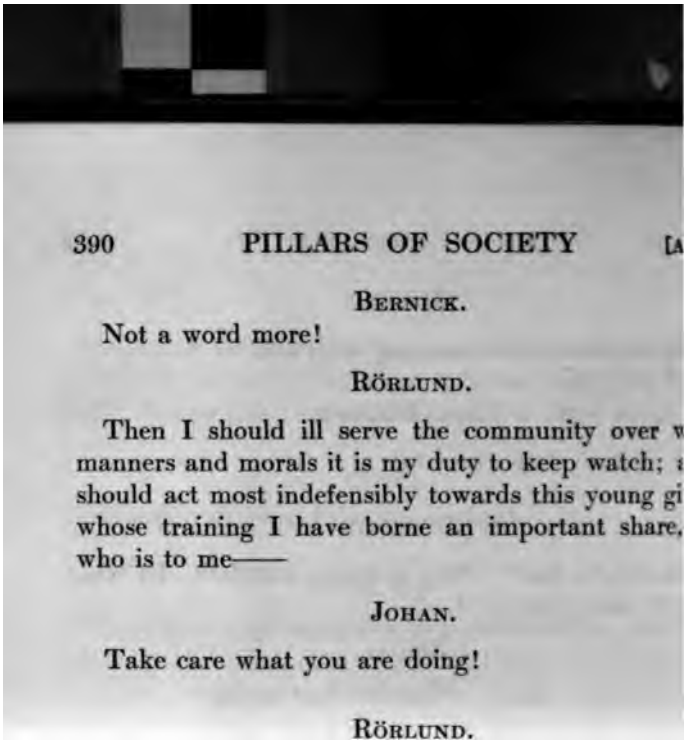
Tell me of any one else that has courage to set me free?

RÖRLUND.

Then you shall know who he is.

JOHAN.

Be silent!



BERNICK.

Not a word more!

RÖRLUND.

Then I should ill serve the community over w
manners and morals it is my duty to keep watch; a
should act most indefensibly towards this young gi
whose training I have borne an important share,
who is to me——

JOHAN.

Take care what you are doing!

RÖRLUND.

She s h a l l know it! Dina, it was this man caused all your mother's misfortune and shame.

BERNICK.

Rector——!

DINA.

He! [*To* JOHAN.] Is this true?

JOHAN.

Karsten, do y o u answer!

BERNICK.

Not a word more! Not a word more to-day!

DINA.

Then it is true.

RÖRLUND.

True, true! And more than that. This person, in whom you were about to place your trust, did not run away empty-handed—Mrs. Bernick's strong-box—the Consul can bear witness!

LONA.

Liar!

BERNICK.

Ah——!

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh God! oh God!

JOHAN.

[*Goes towards him with uplifted arm.*] You dare to——!

LONA.

[*Keeping him back.*] Don't strike him, Johan.

RÖRLUND.

Yes, yes; assault me if you like. But the truth shall out; and this is the truth. Consul Bernick has said so himself; it is notorious to the whole town.—Now, Dina, now you know him. [*A short pause.*

JOHAN.

[*Softly seizing* BERNICK'S *arm.*] Karsten, Karsten, what have you done?

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Softly, in tears.*] Oh, Karsten, that I should bring all this shame upon you!

SANDSTAD.

[*Enters hastily from the right, and says, with his hand still on the door-handle.*] You must really come now, Consul! The whole railway is hanging by a thread.

BERNICK.

[*Absently.*] What is it? What am I to——?

LONA.

[*Earnestly and with emphasis.*] You are to rise and support society, brother-in-law.

SANDSTAD.

Yes, come, come; we need all your moral predominance.

JOHAN.

[*Close to him.*] Bernick, we two will talk of this to-morrow.

[*He goes out through the garden;* BERNICK *goes out to the right with* SANDSTAD, *as if his will were paralysed.*

ACT THIRD

The garden-room in CONSUL BERNICK'S *house.*

BERNICK, *with a cane in his hand, enters, in a violent passion, from the second room on the left, leaving the door half open.*

BERNICK.

There, now! At last I've done it in earnest; I don't think he'll forget that thrashing. [*To some one in the other room.*] What do you say?—*I* say you are a foolish mother! You make excuses for him, and encourage him in all his naughtiness——Not naughtiness? What do you call it then? To steal out of the house at night and go to sea in a fishing-boat; to remain out till late in the day, and put me in mortal terror, as if I hadn't enough anxiety without that. And the young rascal dares to threaten me with running away! Just let him try it!—You? No, I daresay not; you don't seem to care much what becomes of him. I believe if he were to break his neck——! Oh, indeed? But it happens that *I* need some one to carry on my work in the world; it would not suit me to be left childless. Don't argue, Betty; I have said it, once for all; he is not to leave the house. [*Listens.*] Hush, don't let people notice anything.

KRAP *comes in from the right.*

KRAP.

Can you spare me a moment, Consul.

BERNICK.

[*Throws away the cane.*] Of course, of course. Have you come from the shipyard?

KRAP.

Just this moment. H'm——

BERNICK.

Well? Nothing wrong with the *Palm Tree*, I hope?

KRAP.

The *Palm Tree* can sail to-morrow, but——

BERNICK.

The *Indian Girl*, then? I might have guessed that that stiff-necked——

KRAP.

The *Indian Girl* can sail to-morrow, too; but—I don't think she will get very far.

BERNICK.

What do you mean?

KRAP.

Excuse me, Consul, that door is ajar, and I think there is some one in the room——

BERNICK.

[*Shuts the door.*] There then. But what is the meaning of all this secrecy?

KRAP.

It means this: I believe Aune intends to send the *Indian Girl* to the bottom, with every soul on board.

BERNICK.

Good heavens! how can you think——?

KRAP.

I can explain it in no other way, Consul.

BERNICK.

Well then, tell me as shortly as you can——

KRAP.

I will. You know how things have been dragging in the yard since we got the new machines and the new inexperienced workmen?

BERNICK.

Yes, yes.

KRAP.

But this morning, when I went down there, I noticed that the repairs on the American had been going at a great rate. The big patch in her bottom—the rotten place, you know——

BERNICK.

Yes, yes; what about it?

KRAP.

It was completely repaired—to all appearance; plastered up; looked as good as new. I heard that Aune

himself had been working at it by lantern-light the whole night through.

BERNICK.

Yes, yes, and then——?

KRAP.

I was a good deal puzzled. It happened that the workmen were at breakfast, so I could ferret about as I pleased, both outside and inside. It was difficult to get down into the hold, among the cargo; but I saw enough to convince me. There is rascality at work, Consul.

BERNICK.

I can't believe it, Mr. Krap. I cannot and will not believe such a thing of Aune.

KRAP.

I'm sorry for it, but it's the simple truth. There is rascality at work, I say. Not a stick of new timber had been put in, so far as I could see. It was only plugged and puttied up, and covered with plates and tarpaulins, and so forth. All bogus! The *Indian Girl* will never get to New York. She'll go to the bottom like a cracked pot.

BERNICK.

Why, this is horrible! What do you think can be his motive?

KRAP.

He probably wants to bring the machines into discredit; wants to revenge himself; wants to have the old workmen taken on again.

BERNICK.

And for that he would send all these men to their death?

KRAP.

He has been heard to say that the crew of the *Indian Girl* are brute beasts, not men.

BERNICK.

Yes, yes, that may be; but does he not think of the great loss of capital?

KRAP.

Aune is not over-fond of capital, Consul.

BERNICK.

True enough; he is an agitator and mischief-maker; but such a piece of villainy as this——! I'll tell you what, Mr. Krap: this affair must be looked into again. Not a word of it to any one. Our yard would lose its reputation if this came to people's ears.

KRAP.

Of course, but——

BERNICK.

During the dinner-hour you must go down there again; I must have absolute certainty.

KRAP.

You shall, Consul. But, excuse me, what will you do then?

BERNICK.

Why, report the case of course. We cannot be accessories to a crime. I must keep my conscience clear. Besides, it will make a good impression on both the press and the public, to see me disregard all personal interests, and let justice take its course.

KRAP.

Very true, Consul.

BERNICK.

But, first of all, absolute certainty—and, until then, silence.

KRAP.

Not a word, Consul; and you shall have absolute certainty.

[*He goes out through the garden and down the street.*

BERNICK.

[*Half aloud.*] Horrible! But no, it's impossible—inconceivable!

[*As he turns to go to his own room* HILMAR TÖNNESEN *enters from the right.*

HILMAR.

Good-day, Bernick! Well, I congratulate you on your field-day in the Trade Council yesterday.

BERNICK.

Oh, thank you.

HILMAR.

It was a brilliant victory, I hear; the victory of intelligent public spirit over self-interest and prejudice—like a French razzia upon the Kabyles. Strange, that after the unpleasant scene here, you——

BERNICK.

Yes, yes, don't speak of it.

HILMAR.

But the tug-of-war is yet to come.

BERNICK.

In the matter of the railway, you mean?

HILMAR.

Yes. I suppose you have heard of the egg that our editor-friend is hatching?

BERNICK.

[*Anxiously.*] No! What is it?

HILMAR.

Oh, he has got hold of the rumour that's floating about, and is coming out with an article on the subject.

BERNICK.

What rumour?

HILMAR.

Why, about the great buying-up of property along the branch line, of course.

BERNICK.

What do you mean? Is there any such rumour about?

HILMAR.

Yes, over the whole town. I heard it at the club. They say that one of our lawyers has been secretly commissioned to buy up all the forests, all the mining rights, all the water-power——

BERNICK.

And is it known for whom?

HILMAR.

They thought at the club that it must be for a syndicate from some other town that had got wind of your scheme, and had rushed in before the prices rose. Isn't it disgraceful? Ugh!

BERNICK.

Disgraceful?

HILMAR.

Yes, that outsiders should trespass on our preserves in that way. And that one of our own lawyers could lend himself to such a transaction! Now all the profit will go to strangers.

BERNICK.

But this is only a vague rumour.

HILMAR.

People believe it, at any rate; and to-morrow or next day you may look for some editorial comments on the

fact. Every one is indignant about it already. I heard several people say that if this rumour is confirmed they will strike their names off the lists.

BERNICK.

Impossible!

HILMAR.

Indeed? Why do you think these peddling creatures were so ready to join you in your undertaking? Do you think they weren't themselves hankering after——?

BERNICK.

Impossible, I say; there is at least so much public spirit in our little community——

HILMAR.

Here? Oh yes, you are an optimist, and judge others by yourself. But I am a pretty keen observer, and I tell you there is not a person here—except ourselves, of course—not o n e, I say, that holds high the banner of the ideal. [*Up towards the back.*] Ugh, there they are!

BERNICK.

Who?

HILMAR.

The two Americans. [*Looks out to the right.*] And who is that with them? Why, it's the captain of the *Indian Girl.* Ugh!

BERNICK.

What can they want with h i m?

HILMAR.

Oh, it's very appropriate company. They say he has been a slave-dealer or a pirate; and who knows what that couple have turned their hands to in all these years.

BERNICK.

I tell you, such innuendoes are utterly unjust.

HILMAR.

Yes, you are an optimist. But here we have them upon us again of course; so I shall get away in time.

[*Goes towards the door on the left.*

LONA HESSEL *enters from the right.*

LONA.

What, Hilmar, am I driving you away?

HILMAR.

Not at all, not at all. I really oughtn't to have been wasting time here; I have something to say to Betty.

[*Goes out by the second door on the left.*

BERNICK.

[*After a short pause.*] Well, Lona?

LONA.

Well?

BERNICK.

What do you think of me to-day?

LONA.

The same as yesterday; a lie more or less——!

BERNICK.

I must clear all this up. Where has Johan gone to?

LONA.

He will be here directly; he is talking to a man outside there.

BERNICK.

After what you heard yesterday, you can understand that my whole position is ruined if the truth comes to light.

LONA.

I understand.

BERNICK.

Of course I need not tell you that *I* was not guilty of the supposed crime.

LONA.

Of course not. But who was the thief?

BERNICK.

There was no thief. There was no money stolen; not a halfpenny was missing.

LONA.

What?

BERNICK.

Not a halfpenny, I say.

LONA.

But the rumour? How did that shameful rumour get abroad, that Johan——?

BERNICK.

Lona, I find I can talk to you as I can to no one else; I shall conceal nothing from you. *I* had my share in spreading the rumour.

LONA.

You! And you could do this wrong to the man who, for your sake——?

BERNICK.

You must not condemn me without remembering how matters stood at the time. As I told you yesterday, I came home to find my mother involved in a whole series of foolish undertakings. Disasters of various kinds followed; all possible ill-luck seemed to crowd in upon us; our house was on the verge of ruin. I was half reckless and half in despair. Lona, I believe it was principally to deaden thought that I got into that entanglement which ended in Johan's going away.

LONA.

H'm——

BERNICK.

You can easily imagine that there were all sorts of rumours in the air after you two had left. It was said that this was not his first misdemeanour. Some said Dorf had received a large sum of money from him to hold his tongue and keep out of the way; others declared s h e had got the money. At the same time it got abroad

that our house had difficulty in meeting its engagements. What more natural than that the scandal-mongers should put these two rumours together? Then, as Madam Dorf remained here in unmistakable poverty, people began to say that he had taken the money with him to America; and rumour made the sum larger and larger every day.

LONA.

And you, Karsten——?

BERNICK.

I clutched at the rumour as a drowning man clutches at a straw.

LONA.

You helped to spread it?

BERNICK.

I did not contradict it. Our creditors were beginning to press upon us; I had to quiet them—to prevent them from doubting the solidity of the firm. I let it be thought that a momentary misfortune had befallen us, but that if people only refrained from pressing us—if they would only give us time—every one should be paid in full.

LONA.

And every one was paid in full?

BERNICK.

Yes, Lona; that rumour saved our house and made me the man I am.

LONA.

A lie, then, has made you the man you are.

BERNICK.

did it hurt, then? Johan intended never to

LONA.

You ask whom it hurt? Look into yourself and see if it has not hurt you.

CK.

lease, and you will find at
ıst be kept out of sight.

A.

And you cal lars of society!

CK.

Society has none better.

LONA.

Then what does it matter whether such a society is supported or not? What is it that passes current here? Lies and shams—nothing else. Here are you, the first man in the town, prosperous, powerful, looked up to by every one—you, who have set the brand of crime upon an innocent man.

BERNICK.

Do you think I do not feel deeply the wrong I have done him? Do you think I am not prepared to atone for it?

LONA.

How? By speaking out?

BERNICK.

Can you ask me to do that?

LONA.

How else can you atone for such a wrong?

BERNICK.

I am rich, Lona; Johan may ask for what he pleases——

LONA.

Yes, offer him money, and you'll see what he will answer.

BERNICK.

Do you know what he intends to do?

LONA.

No. Since yesterday he has said nothing to me. It seems as if all this had suddenly made a full-grown man of him.

BERNICK.

I must speak to him.

LONA.

Then here he is.

JOHAN TÖNNESEN *enters from the right.*

BERNICK.

[*Going towards him.*] Johan——!

JOHAN.

[*Waving him off.*] Let me speak first. Yesterday morning I gave you my word to be silent.

BERNICK.

You did.

JOHAN.

But I did not know then——

BERNICK.

Johan, let me in two words explain the circumstances——

JOHAN.

There is no necessity; I understand the circumstances very well. Your house was in a difficult position; and I was far away, and you had my unprotected name and fame to do what you liked with—— Well, I don't blame you so much for it; we were young and thoughtless in those days. But now I need the truth, and now you must speak out.

BERNICK.

And just at this moment I require all my moral authority, and therefore I c a n n o t speak out.

JOHAN.

I don't care so much about the falsehoods you have trumped up at my expense; it is the other thing that you

must take upon your own shoulders. Dina shall be my wife, and I will live here, here in this town, along with her.

LONA.

You will?

BERNICK.

With Dina! As your wife? Here, in this town!

JOHAN.

Yes, just here; I will stay here to outface all these liars and backbiters. And that I may win her, you must set me free.

BERNICK.

Have you considered that, if I plead guilty to the one thing, I plead guilty to the other as well? I can prove by our books, you say, that there was no embezzlement at all? But I cannot; our books were not so accurately kept in those days. And even if I could, what would be gained by it? Should I not figure, at best, as the man who, having once saved himself by falsehood, had let that falsehood, and all its consequences, run on for fifteen years, without taking a single step to retract it? You have forgotten what our society is, or you would know that that would crush me to the very dust.

JOHAN.

I can only repeat that I shall make Madam Dorf's daughter my wife, and live with her here, in this town.

BERNICK.

[*Wipes the perspiration from his forehead.*] Hear me, Johan—and you, too, Lona. My position at this mo-

ment is not an ordinary one. I am so situated, that if you strike this blow you destroy me utterly, and not only me, but also a great and golden future for the community which was, after all, the home of your childhood.

JOHAN.

And if I do not strike the blow, I destroy all that makes my own future of value to me.

LONA.

Go on, Karsten.

BERNICK.

Then listen. Everything turns upon this question of the railway, and that is not so simple as you think. Of course you have heard that last year there was some talk of a coast-line? It had many powerful advocates in the district, and especially in the press; but I succeeded in blocking it, because it would have injured our steamboat trade along the coast.

LONA.

Have you an interest in this steamboat trade?

BERNICK.

Yes; but no one dared to impugn my motives on that account. My spotless name was an ample safeguard. For that matter, I could have borne the loss; but the town could not. Then the inland line was determined on. As soon as the route was fixed, I assured myself secretly that a branch connection between it and the town was practicable.

LONA.

Why secretly, Karsten?

BERNICK.

Have you heard any talk of the great buying-up of forests, mines, and water-power?

JOHAN.

Yes, for a company in some other town——

BERNICK.

As these properties now lie, they are as good as worthless to their scattered owners; so they have sold comparatively cheap. If the purchaser had waited until the branch line was known to be in contemplation, the vendors would have demanded fancy prices.

LONA.

Very likely; but what then?

BERNICK.

Now comes the point which may or may not be interpreted favourably—a risk which no man in our community could afford to incur, unless he had a spotless and honoured name to rely upon.

LONA.

Well?

BERNICK.

It is I who have bought up the whole.

LONA.

You.

JOHAN.

On your own account?

BERNICK.

On my own account. If the branch line is made, I am a millionaire; if not, I am ruined.

LONA.

This is a great risk, Karsten.

BERNICK.

I have staked all I possess upon the throw.

LONA.

I was not thinking of the money; but when it comes out that——

BERNICK.

Yes, that is the great point. With the unblemished reputation I have hitherto borne, I can take the whole affair upon my shoulders and carry it through, saying to my fellow citizens, "See, this I have ventured for the good of the community!"

LONA.

Of the community?

BERNICK.

Yes; and not a soul will question my motives.

LONA.

Then there are some people, it seems, who have acted more openly than you, with no private interests, no ulterior designs.

BERNICK.

Who?

LONA.

Why, Rummel and Sandstad and Vigeland, of course.

BERNICK.

To make sure of their support, I had to let them into the secret.

LONA.

And they?

BERNICK.

They have stipulated for a fifth of the profits.

LONA.

Oh, these pillars of society!

BERNICK.

Can you not see that it is society itself that compels us to adopt these indirect courses? What would have happened if I had not acted secretly? Why, every one would have thrown himself into the undertaking, and the whole thing would have been broken up, frittered away, bungled, and ruined. There is not a single man here, except myself, that knows how to organise an enormous concern such as this will become; in this country the men of real

business ability are almost all of foreign descent. That is why my conscience acquits me in this matter. Only in my hands can all this property be of permanent benefit to the many whose subsistence will depend upon it.

LONA.

I believe you are right there, Karsten.

JOHAN.

But I know nothing of "the many," and my life's happiness is at stake.

BERNICK.

The welfare of your native place is no less at stake. If things come to the surface which cast a slur upon my past life, all my opponents will join forces and overwhelm me. In our society a boyish error is never effaced. People will scrutinise my whole career, will rake up a

JOHAN.

Yes, I will go away, and say nothing; but I will come back again, and then I will speak.

BERNICK.

Remain over there, Johan; be silent, and I am ready to share with you——

JOHAN.

Keep your money, and give me back my good name.

BERNICK.

And sacrifice my own!

JOHAN.

You and your "community" must settle that between you. I must and will make Dina my wife. So I shall sail to-morrow in the *Indian Girl*——

BERNICK.

In the *Indian Girl?*

JOHAN.

Yes; the captain has promised to take me. I shall go across, I tell you, sell my farm, and settle up my affairs. In two months I shall be back again.

BERNICK.

And then you will tell all?

JOHAN.

Then the wrong-doer must take up his own burden.

BERNICK.

Do you forget that I must also take upon me wrong-doing of which I was n o t guilty?

JOHAN.

Who was it tha ars ago, reaped the benefit of that shameful ..

CK.

You drive me to ! But if you speak, I will deny everything! t is all a conspiracy against me; a piece of revenge, ...at you have come here to blackmail me!

LONA.

Shame on you, Karsten!

BERNICK.

I am desperate, I tell you; I am fighting for my life. I will deny everything, everything!

JOHAN.

I have your two letters. I found them in my box among my other papers. I read them through this morning; they are plain enough.

BERNICK.

And you will produce them?

JOHAN.

If you force me to.

BERNICK.

And in two months you will be here again?

JOHAN.

I hope so. The wind is fair. In three weeks I shall be in New York—if the *Indian Girl* doesn't go to the bottom.

BERNICK.

[*Starting.*] Go to the bottom? Why should the *Indian Girl* go to the bottom?

JOHAN.

That's just what I say.

BERNICK.

[*Almost inaudibly.*] Go to the bottom?

JOHAN.

Well, Bernick, now you know what you have to expect; you must do what you can in the meantime. Good-bye! Give my love to Betty, though she certainly has not received me in a very sisterly fashion. But Martha I must see. She must tell Dina—she must promise me——

[*He goes out by the second door on the left.*

BERNICK.

[*To himself.*] The *Indian Girl*——? [*Quickly.*] Lona, you must prevent this!

LONA.

You see yourself, Karsten—I have lost all power over him. [*She follows* JOHAN *into the room on the left.*

BERNICK.

[*In unquiet thought.*] Go to the bottom——?

AUNE *enters from the right.*

AUNE.

Asking your pardon, Consul, might I speak to you——?

BERNICK.

[*Turns angrily.*] What do you want?

AUNE.

I wanted, if I might, to ask you a question, Consul Bernick.

BERNICK.

Well, well; be quick. What is it about?

AUNE.

I wanted to know if you're still determined—firmly determined—to turn me adrift if the *Indian Girl* should not be ready for sea to-morrow?

BERNICK.

What now? The ship w i l l be ready for sea.

AUNE.

Yes—she will. But supposing as she wasn't—should I have to go?

BERNICK.

Why ask such useless questions?

AUNE.

I want to make quite sure, Consul. Just answer me: should I have to go?

BERNICK.

Am I in the habit of changing my mind?

AUNE.

Then to-morrow I should have lost the place that rightly belongs to me in my home and family—lost my influence among the workmen—lost all my chances of helping them as are lowly and down-trodden?

BERNICK.

We have discussed that point long ago, Aune.

AUNE.

Then the *Indian Girl* must sail. [*A short pause.*

BERNICK.

Listen: I cannot look after everything myself, and be responsible for everything. I suppose you are prepared to assure me that the repairs are thoroughly carried out?

AUNE.

It was a very short time you gave me, Consul.

BERNICK.

But the repairs are all right, you say?

AUNE.

The weather is fine, and it is midsummer.

[*Another silence.*

BERNICK.

Have you anything more to say to me?

AUNE.

I don't know as there's aught else, Consul.

BERNICK.

Then—the *Indian Girl* sails——

AUNE.

To-morrow?

BERNICK.

Yes.

AUNE.

Very well. [*He bows and goes out.*

[BERNICK *stands for a moment irresolute; then he goes quickly towards the door as if to call* AUNE *back, but stops and stands hesitating with his hand on the knob. At that moment the door is opened from outside, and* KRAP *enters.*

KRAP.

[*Speaking low.*] Aha, he has been here. Has he confessed?

BERNICK.

H'm——; have you discovered anything?

KRAP.

What need was there? Did you not see the evil conscience looking out of his very eyes?

BERNICK.

Oh, nonsense;—no one can see such things. I asked if you had discovered anything?

KRAP.

I couldn't get at it; I was too late; they were busy hauling the ship out of dock. But this very haste proves plainly that——

BERNICK.

It proves nothing. The inspection has taken place, then?

KRAP.

Of course; but——

BERNICK.

There you see! And they have, of course, found nothing to complain of?

KRAP.

Consul, you know very well how such inspections are conducted, especially in a yard that has such a name as ours.

BERNICK.

No matter; it relieves us of all reproach.

KRAP.

Could you really not read in Aune's face, Consul—?

BERNICK.

Aune has entirely satisfied me, I tell you.

KRAP.

And I tell you I am morally convinced——

BERNICK.

What does this mean, Mr. Krap? I know very well that you have a grudge against the man; but if you want to attack him, you should choose some other opportunity. You know how essential it is for me—or rather for the owners—that the *Indian Girl* should sail to-morrow.

KRAP.

Very well; so be it; but if ever we hear of t h a t ship again—h'm!

VIGELAND *enters from the right.*

VIGELAND.

How do you do, Consul? Have you a moment to spare?

BERNICK.

At your service, Mr. Vigeland.

VIGELAND.

I only want to know if you agree with me that the *Palm Tree* ought to sail to-morrow?

BERNICK.

Yes—I thought that was settled.

VIGELAND.

But the captain has just come to tell me that the storm-signals have been hoisted.

KRAP.

The barometer has fallen rapidly since this morning.

BERNICK.

Indeed? Is a storm threatening?

VIGELAND.

A stiff breeze at any rate; but not a contrary wind; quite the reverse——

BERNICK.

H'm; what do you say, then?

VIGELAND.

I say, as I said to the captain, that the *Palm Tree* is in the hands of Providence. And besides, she is only going over the North Sea to begin with; and freights are pretty high in England just now, so that——

BERNICK.

Yes, it would probably mean a loss if we delayed.

VIGELAND.

The vessel is soundly built, you know, and fully insured too. I can tell you it's another matter with the *Indian Girl*——

BERNICK.

What do you mean?

VIGELAND.

Why, she is to sail to-morrow too.

BERNICK.

Yes, the owners hurried us on, and besides——

VIGELAND.

Well, if that old hulk can venture out—and with such a crew into the bargain—it would be a shame if we couldn't——

BERNICK.

Well well; I suppose you have the ship's papers with you.

VIGELAND.

Yes, here they are.

BERNICK.

Good; then perhaps you will go with Mr. Krap——

KRAP.

This way, please; we shall soon put them in order.

VIGELAND.

Thanks.—And the result we will leave in the hands of Omnipotence, Consul.

[He goes with KRAP *into the foremost room on the left.* DOCTOR RÖRLUND *comes through the garden.*

RÖRLUND.

What! You at home at this time of the day, Consul!

BERNICK.

[Absently.] As you see!

RÖRLUND.

I looked in to see your wife. I thought she might need a word of consolation.

BERNICK.

I daresay she does. But I, too, should be glad of a word with you.

RÖRLUND.

With pleasure, Consul. But what is the matter with you? You look quite pale and upset.

BERNICK.

Indeed? Do I? Well, can you wonder at it, with such a host of things crowding upon me all at once. Besides all my usual business, I have this affair of the railway—— Give me your attention for a moment, Doctor; let me ask you a question.

RÖRLUND.

By all means, Consul.

BERNICK.

A thought has occurred to me lately: When one stands on the threshold of a great undertaking, that is to promote the welfare of thousands,—if a single sacrifice should be demanded——?

RÖRLUND.

How do you mean?

BERNICK.

Take, for example, a man who is starting a large manufactory. He knows very well—for all experience has taught him—that sooner or later, in the working of that manufactory, human life will be lost.

RÖRLUND.

Yes, it is only too probable.

BERNICK.

Or suppose he is about to open a mine. He takes into his service both fathers of families and young men in the heyday of life. May it not be predicted with certainty that some will perish in the undertaking?

RÖRLUND.

Unhappily there can be little doubt of that.

BERNICK.

Well; such a man, then, knows beforehand that his enterprise will undoubtedly, some time or other, lead to

the loss of life. But the undertaking is for the greater good of the greater number; for every life it costs, it will, with equal certainty, promote the welfare of many hundreds.

RÖRLUND.

Ah, you are thinking of the railway—of all the dangerous tunnellings, and blastings, and that sort of thing——

BERNICK.

Yes—yes, of course—I am thinking of the railway. And, besides, the railway will bring with it both manufactories and mines. But don't you think that——

RÖRLUND.

My dear Consul, you are almost too scrupulous. If you place the affair in the hands of Providence——

BERNICK.

Yes; yes, of course; Providence——

RÖRLUND.

——you can have nothing to reproach yourself with. Go on and prosper with the railway.

BERNICK.

Yes, but let us take a peculiar case. Let us suppose a blasting has to be made at a dangerous place; and unless it is carried out, the railway will come to a standstill. Suppose the engineer knows that it will cost the life of the workman who fires the fuse; but fired it must be, and it is the engineer's duty to send a workman to do it.

RÖRLUND.

H'm——

BERNICK.

I know what you will say: It would be heroic if the engineer himself took the match and went and fired the fuse. But no one does such things. So he must sacrifice a workman.

RÖRLUND.

No engineer among us would ever do that.

BERNICK.

No engineer in the great nations would think twice about doing it.

RÖRLUND.

In the great nations? No, I daresay not. In those corrupt and unscrupulous communities——

RÖRLUND.

Is a human life a petty consideration?

BERNICK.

When that human life is a menace to the welfare of thousands.

RÖRLUND.

But you are putting quite inconceivable cases, Consul! I don't understand you to-day. And then you refer me to the great communities. Yes, t h e r e—what does a human life count for there? They think no more of staking life than of staking capital. But we, I hope, look at things from an entirely different moral standpoint. Think of our exemplary shipowners! Name me a single merchant here among us who, for the sake of paltry profit, would sacrifice one human life! And then think of those scoundrels in the great communities who enrich themselves by sending out one unseaworthy ship after another——

BERNICK.

I am not speaking of unseaworthy ships!

RÖRLUND.

But I am, Consul.

BERNICK.

Yes, but to what purpose? It has nothing to do with the question.—Oh, these little craven qualms of conscience! If a general among us were to lead his troops under fire, and get some of them shot, he would never sleep o' nights after it. Elsewhere it is very different. You should hear what he says——

[*Pointing to the door on the left.*

RÖRLUND.

He? Who? The American——?

BERNICK.

Of course. You should hear how people in America——

RÖRLUND.

Is he in there? Why did you not tell me? I shall go at once——

BERNICK.

It's of no use. You will make no impression on him.

RÖRLUND.

That we shall see. Ah, here he is.

JOHAN TÖNNESEN *comes from the room on the left.*

JOHAN.

[redacted]

JOHAN.

She s h a l l be my wife.

RÖRLUND.

Well, then, you shall hear—— [*Goes to the half-open door.*] Mrs. Bernick, will you be kind enough to be a witness—— And you too, Miss Martha. And bring Dina with you. [*Sees* LONA.] Ah, are y o u here, too?

LONA.

[*In the doorway.*] Shall I come?

RÖRLUND.

As many as will—the more the better.

BERNICK.

What are you going to do?

LONA, MRS. BERNICK, MARTHA, DINA, *and* HILMAR TÖNNESEN *come out of the room on the left.*

MRS. BERNICK.

Doctor, nothing I can say will stop him from——

RÖRLUND.

I shall stop him, Mrs. Bernick.—Dina, you are a thoughtless girl. But I do not blame you very much. You have stood here too long without the moral support that should have sustained you. I blame myself for not having given you that support sooner.

DINA.

You must not speak now!

MRS. BERNICK.

What is all this?

RÖRLUND.

It is now that I must speak, Dina, though your conduct yesterday and to-day has made it ten times more difficult for me. But all other considerations must give place to your rescue. You remember the promise I gave you. You remember what you promised to answer, when I found that the time had come. Now I can hesitate no longer, and therefore—[*To* JOHAN TÖNNESEN]—I tell you that this girl, whom you are pursuing, is betrothed to me.

MRS. BERNICK.

DINA.

[*After a short pause.*] Yes.

RÖRLUND.

This, I trust, will paralyse all your arts of seduction. The step I have determined to take for Dina's welfare may now be made known to our whole community. I hope—nay, I am sure—that it will not be misinterpreted. And now, Mrs. Bernick, I think we had better take her away from here, and try to restore her mind to peace and equilibrium.

MRS. BERNICK.

Yes, come. Oh, Dina, what happiness for you!

[*She leads* DINA *out to the left;* DOCTOR RÖRLUND *goes along with them.*

MARTHA.

Good-bye, Johan! [*She goes out.*

HILMAR.

[*At the garden door.*] H'm—well, I really must say——

LONA.

[*Who has been following* DINA *with her eyes.*] Don't be cast down, boy! I shall stay here and look after the Pastor. [*She goes out to the right.*

BERNICK.

Johan, you won't sail now with the *Indian Girl.*

JOHAN.

Now more than ever.

BERNICK.

Then you will not come back again?

JOHAN.

I shall come back.

BERNICK.

After this? What would you do after this?

JOHAN.

Revenge myself on the whole band of you; crush as many of you as I can.

[*He goes out to the right.* VIGELAND *and* KRAP *come from the Consul's office.*

VIGELAND.

Well, the papers are in order now, Consul.

BERNICK.

Good, good——

KRAP.

[*In a low voice.*] Then it is settled that the *Indian Girl* is to sail to-morrow?

BERNICK.

She is to sail.

[*He goes into his room.* VIGELAND *and* KRAP *go out to the right.* HILMAR TÖNNESEN *is following them, when* OLAF *peeps cautiously out at the door on the left.*

OLAF.

Uncle! Uncle Hilmar!

HILMAR.

Ugh, is that you? Why don't you stay upstairs? You know you are under arrest.

OLAF.

[*Comes a few steps forward.*] Sh! Uncle Hilmar, do you know the news?

HILMAR.

I know that you got a thrashing to-day.

OLAF.

[*Looks threateningly towards his father's room.*] He shan't thrash me again. But do you know that Uncle Johan is to sail to-morrow with the Americans?

HILMAR.

What's that to you? You get upstairs again!

OLAF.

Perhaps I may go buffalo-hunting yet, uncle.

HILMAR.

Rubbish! such a young milksop as you——

OLAF.

Just wait a little; you shall hear something to-morrow!

HILMAR.

Little blockhead!

[*He goes out through the garden.* OLAF, *catching sight of* KRAP, *who comes from the right, runs in again and shuts the door.*

KRAP.

[*Goes up to the Consul's door and opens it a little.*] Excuse my coming again, Consul, but it's blowing up to a hurricane. [*He waits a moment; there is no answer.*] Is the *Indian Girl* to sail in spite of it?

[*After a short pause.*

BERNICK.

[*Answers from the office.*] The *Indian Girl* is to sail in spite of it.

[KRAP *shuts the door and goes out again to the right.*

ACT FOURTH

The garden-room in CONSUL BERNICK'S *house. The table has been removed. It is a stormy afternoon, already half dark, and growing darker.*

A man-servant lights the chandelier; two maid-servants bring in flower-pots, lamps, and candles, which are placed on tables and brackets along the wall. RUMMEL, *wearing a dress-coat, white gloves, and a white necktie, stands in the room giving directions.*

RUMMEL.

[*To the servant.*] Only every second candle, Jacob. The place mustn't look too brilliant; it's supposed to be a surprise, you know. And all these flowers——? Oh, yes, let them stand; it will look as if they were always there——

CONSUL BERNICK *comes out of his room.*

BERNICK.

[*At the door.*] What is the meaning of all this?

RUMMEL.

Tut, tut, are you there? [*To the servants.*] Yes, you can go now.

[*The servants go out by the second door on the left.*

BERNICK.

[*Coming into the room.*] Why, Rummel, what is the meaning of all this?

RUMMEL.

It means that the proudest moment of your life has arrived. The whole town is coming in procession to do homage to its leading citizen.

BERNICK.

What do you mean?

RUMMEL.

With banners and music, sir! We should have had torches too; but it was thought dangerous in this stormy weather. However, there's to be an illumination; and that will have an excellent effect in the newspapers.

BERNICK.

Listen, Rummel—I will have nothing to do with all this.

RUMMEL.

Oh, it's too late now; they'll be here in half an hour.

BERNICK.

Why did you not tell me of this before?

RUMMEL.

Just because I was afraid you would make objections. But I arranged it all with your wife; she allowed me to put things in order a little, and she is going to look to the refreshments herself.

BERNICK.

[*Listening.*] What's that? Are they coming already? I thought I heard singing.

RUMMEL.

[*At the garden-door.*] Singing? Oh, it's only the Americans. They are hauling the *Indian Girl* out to the buoy.

BERNICK.

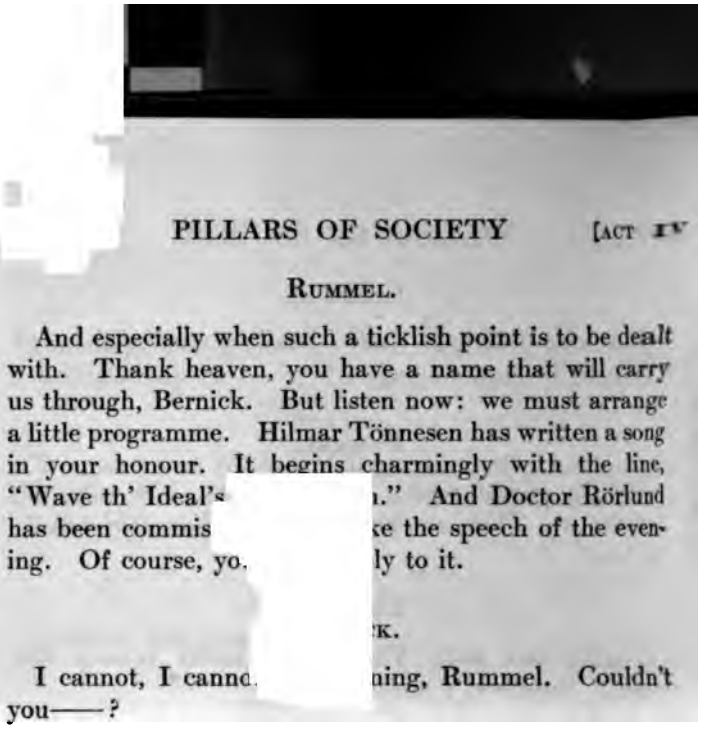
Hauling her out! Yes——! I really cannot this evening, Rummel; I am not well.

RUMMEL.

You're certainly not looking well. But you must pull yourself together. Come, come, man, pull yourself together! I and Sandstad and Vigeland attach the greatest importance to this affair. Our opponents must be crushed by an overwhelming utterance of public opinion. The rumours are spreading over the town; the announcement as to the purchase of the property cannot be kept back any longer. This very evening, amid songs and speeches and the ring of brimming goblets—in short, amid all the effervescent enthusiasm of the occasion—you must announce what you have ventured to do for the good of the community. With the aid of effervescent enthusiasm, as I said just now, it is astonishing what one can effect in this town. But we must have the effervescence, or it won't do.

BERNICK.

Yes, yes, yes——



RUMMEL.

And especially when such a ticklish point is to be dealt with. Thank heaven, you have a name that will carry us through, Bernick. But listen now: we must arrange a little programme. Hilmar Tönnesen has written a song in your honour. It begins charmingly with the line, "Wave th' Ideal's ı." And Doctor Rörlund has been commis ıe the speech of the evening. Of course, yo. ly to it.

ıK.

I cannot, I cannc. ning, Rummel. Couldn't you——?

RUMMEL.

Impossible, much as I should like to. The Doctor's speech will, of course, be mainly addressed to you. Perhaps a few words will be devoted to the rest of us. I have spoken to Vigeland and Sandstad about it. We had arranged that your reply should take the form of a toast to the general welfare of the community. Sandstad will say a few words on the harmony between the different classes of the community; Vigeland will express the fervent hope that our new undertaking may not disturb the moral basis upon which we stand; and I will call attention, in a few well-chosen words, to the claims of Woman, whose more modest exertions are not without their use in the community. But you are not listening——

BERNICK.

Yes—yes, I am. Tell me, do you think the sea is running very high outside?

RUMMEL.

Oh, you are anxious on account of the *Palm Tree?* She's well insured, isn't she?

BERNICK.

Yes, insured; but——

RUMMEL.

And in good repair; that's the main thing.

BERNICK.

H'm.—And even if anything happens to a vessel, it does not follow that lives will be lost. The ship and cargo may go down—people may lose chests and papers——

RUMMEL.

Good gracious, chests and papers don't matter much——

BERNICK.

Not matter! No, no, I only meant—— Hark—that singing again!

RUMMEL.

It's on board the *Palm Tree.*

VIGELAND *enters from the right.*

VIGELAND.

Yes, they are hauling out the *Palm Tree.* Good-evening, Consul.

BERNICK.

And you, who know the sea so well, don't hesitate to——?

VIGELAND.

I don't hesitate to trust in Providence, Consul! Besides, I have been on board and distributed a few leaflets, which I hope will act with a blessing.

SANDSTAD *and* KRAP *enter from the right.*

SANDSTAD.

[*At the door.*] It's a miracle if they manage to pull through. Ah, here we are—good-evening, good-evening.

BERNICK.

Is anything the matter, Mr. Krap?

KRAP.

I have nothing to say, Consul.

SANDSTAD.

Every man on board the *Indian Girl* is drunk. If those animals ever get over alive, I'm no prophet.

LONA *enters from the right.*

LONA.

[*To* BERNICK.] Johan told me to say good-bye for him.

BERNICK.

Is he on board already?

LONA.

He will be soon, at any rate. We parted outside the hotel.

BERNICK.

And he holds to his purpose?

LONA.

Firm as a rock.

RUMMEL.

[*At one of the windows.*] Deuce take these new-fangled arrangements. I can't get these curtains drawn.

LONA.

Are they to be drawn? I thought, on the contrary——

RUMMEL.

They are to be drawn at first, Miss Hessel. Of course you know what is going on?

LONA.

Oh, of course. Let me help you. [*Takes one of the cords.*] I shall let the curtain fall upon my brother-in-law—though I would rather raise it.

RUMMEL.

That you can do later. When the garden is filled with a surging multitude, then the curtains are drawn back, and reveal an astonished and delighted family. A citizen's home should be transparent to all the world.

[BERNICK *seems about to say something, but turns quickly and goes into his office.*

RUMMEL.

Well, let us hold our last council of war. Come, Mr. Krap; we want you to supply us with a few facts.

[*All the men go into the Consul's office.* LONA *has drawn all the curtains over the windows, and is just going to draw the curtain over the open glass door, when* OLAF *drops down from above, alighting at the top of the garden stair; he has a plaid over his shoulder and a bundle in his hand.*

LONA.

Good heavens, child, how you startled me!

OLAF.

[*Hiding the bundle.*] Sh, auntie!

LONA.

Why did you jump out at the window?—Where are you going?

OLAF.

Sh, don't tell, auntie. I'm going to Uncle Johan; only down to the pier, you know;—just to say good-bye to him. Good-night, auntie!

[*He runs out through the garden.*

LONA.

No! stop! Olaf!—Olaf!

JOHAN TÖNNESEN, *in travelling dress, with a bag over his shoulder, steals in by the door on the right.*

JOHAN.

Lona!

LONA.

[*Turning.*] What! You here again?

JOHAN.

There are still a few minutes to spare. I must see her once more. We cannot part so.

MARTHA *and* DINA, *both wearing cloaks, and the latter with a small travelling-bag in her hand, enter by the second door on the left.*

DINA.

I must see him! I must see him!

MARTHA.

Yes, you shall go to him, Dina!

DINA.

There he is!

JOHAN.

Dina!

DINA.

Take me with you!

JOHAN.

What——!

LONA.

You will go?

DINA.

Yes, take me with you. The other has written to me, saying that this evening it is to be announced to every one——

JOHAN.

Dina—you do not love him?

DINA.

I have never loved that man. I would rather be at the bottom of the fjord than be engaged to him! Oh, how he seemed to make me grovel before him yesterday with his patronising phrases! How he made me feel that he was stooping to an abject creature! I will not be looked down upon any more. I will go away. May I come with you?

JOHAN.

Yes, yes—a thousand times yes!

DINA.

I shall not be a burden on you long. Only help me to get over there; help me to make a start——

JOHAN.

Hurrah! We shall manage all that, Dina!

LONA.

[*Pointing to the Consul's door.*] Hush! not so loud!

JOHAN.

Dina, I will take such care of you!

DINA.

No, no, I won't have that. I will make my own way; I shall manage well enough over there. Only let me get away from here. Oh, those women—you don't know—they have actually written to me to-day, exhorting me to appreciate my good fortune, impressing upon me what magnanimity he has shown. To-morrow, and every day of my life, they would be watching me to see whether I showed myself worthy of it all. I have a horror of all this propriety!

JOHAN.

Tell me, Dina, is that your only reason for coming? Am I nothing to you?

DINA.

Yes, Johan, you are more to me than any one else in the world.

JOHAN.

Oh, Dina——!

DINA.

They all tell me that I must hate and detest you; that it is my duty. But I don't understand all this about duty; I never could understand it.

LONA.

And you never shall, my child!

MARTHA.

No, you shall not; and that is why you must go with him, as his wife.

JOHAN.

Yes, yes!

LONA.

What? I must kiss you for that, Martha! I didn't expect this of y o u.

MARTHA.

No, I daresay not; I didn't expect it myself. But sooner or later the crisis was bound to come. Oh, how we suffer here, under this tyranny of custom and convention! Rebel against it, Dina! Marry him. Show that it is possible to set this use-and-wont at defiance!

JOHAN.

What is your answer, Dina?

DINA.

Yes, I will be your wife.

JOHAN.

Dina!

DINA.

But first I will work, and become something for myself, just as you are. I will give myself; I will not be simply taken.

LONA.

Right, right! So it should be.

JOHAN.

Good; I shall wait and hope——

LONA.

——and win too, boy. But now, on board.

JOHAN.

Yes, on board! Ah, Lona, my dear, a word with you; come here——

[*He leads her up towards the back and talks rapidly to her.*

MARTHA.

Dina—happy girl! Let me look at you and kiss you once more—for the last time.

DINA.

Not the last time; no, my dear, dear aunt—we shall meet again.

MARTHA.

Never! Promise me, Dina, never to come back again. [*Seizes both her hands and looks into her face.*] Now go to your happiness, my dear child—over the sea. Oh, how often have I sat in the schoolroom and longed to be over there! It must be beautiful there; the heaven is wider; the clouds sail higher than here; a larger, freer air sweeps over the heads of the people——

DINA.

Oh, Aunt Martha, you will follow us some day.

MARTHA.

I? Never, never. My little life-work lies here; and now I think I can give myself to it wholly and unreservedly.

DINA.

I cannot imagine being parted from you.

MARTHA.

Ah, one can part from so much, Dina. [*Kisses her.*] But you will not have to learn that lesson, my dear child. Promise me to make him happy.

DINA.

I will not promise anything. I hate this promising. Things must come as they can.

MARTHA.

Yes, yes, you are right. You have only to remain as you are—true and faithful to yourself.

DINA.

That I will, Aunt Martha.

LONA.

[*Puts in her pocket some papers which Johan has given her.*] Good, good, my dear boy. But now, away.

JOHAN.

Yes, now there's no time to be lost. Good-bye, Lona; thanks, thanks for all you have been to me. Good-bye, Martha, and thanks to you too for your faithful friendship.

MARTHA.

Good-bye, Johan! Good-bye, Dina! And happiness be over all your days!

[*She and* LONA *hurry them towards the door in the background.* JOHAN TÖNNESEN *and* DINA *go quickly out through the garden.* LONA *shuts the door and draws the curtain.*

LONA.

Now we are alone, Martha. You have lost her, and I him.

MARTHA.

You—him?

LONA.

Oh, I had half lost him already over there. The boy longed to stand on his own feet; so I made him imagine that *I* was suffering from home-sickness.

MARTHA.

That was it? Now I understand why you came. But he will want you back again, Lona.

LONA.

An old step-sister—what can he want with her now? Men break many a tie when happiness beckons to them.

MARTHA.

That is true, sometimes.

LONA.

Now we two must hold together, Martha.

MARTHA.

Can I be anything to you?

LONA.

Who more? We two foster-mothers—have we not both lost our children? Now we are alone!

MARTHA.

Yes, alone. So now I will tell you this—I have loved him more than all the world.

LONA.

Martha? [*Seizes her arm.*] Is this the truth?

MARTHA.

My whole life lies in the words. I have loved him, and

LONA.

It was Dina that overshadowed you, Martha.

MARTHA.

It is well that she did. When he went away we were of the same age; when I saw him again—oh, that horrible moment—I realised that I was ten years older than he. He had lived out there in the bright, quivering sunshine, and drunk in youth and health at every breath; and here sat I the while, spinning and spinning——

LONA.

——the thread of his happiness, Martha.

MARTHA.

Yes, it was gold I spun. No bitterness! We have been two good sisters to him, Lona, have we not?

LONA.

[*Embraces her.*] Martha!

CONSUL BERNICK *comes out of his room.*

BERNICK.

[*To the men inside.*] Yes, yes, settle it as you please. When the time comes, I shall be ready—— [*Shuts the door.*] Ah, are you there? By-the-bye, Martha, you had better look to your dress a little. And tell Betty to do the same. I don't want anything out of the way, of course; just homely neatness. But you must be quick.

LONA.

And you must look bright and happy, Martha; member this is a joyful surprise to you.

BERNICK.

Olaf must come down too. I will have him at my

LONA.

H'm, Olaf——

MARTHA.

I will tell Betty.

[*She goes out by the second door on the*

LONA.

Well, so the great and solemn hour has come.

BERNICK.

[*Walks restlessly up and down.*] Yes, it has com

LONA.

At such a time, no doubt, a man must feel proud happy.

BERNICK.

[*Looks at her.*] H'm——

LONA.

The whole town is to be illuminated, I hear.

BERNICK.

Yes, I believe there is some such idea.

LONA.

All the clubs will turn out with their banners. Your name will shine in letters of fire. To-night it will be telegraphed to every corner of the country—"Surrounded by his happy family, Consul Bernick received the homage of his fellow citizens as one of the pillars of societ ."

BERNICK.

So it will; and the crowd in the street will shout and hurrah, and insist on my coming forward into the doorway there, and I shall have to bow and thank them.

LONA.

Have to——?

BERNICK.

Do you think I feel happy at this moment?

LONA.

No, *I* do not think that you can feel altogether happy.

BERNICK.

Lona, you despise me.

LONA.

Not yet.

BERNICK.

And you have no right to. Not to d e s p i s e me!—Lona, you cannot conceive how unspeakably alone I stand, here in this narrow, stunted society—how, year by year, I have had to put a tighter curb on my ambition

for a full and satisfying life-work. What have I accomplished, for all the show it makes? Scrap-work—odds and ends. There is no room here for other and larger work. If I tried to go a step in advance of the views and ideas of the day, all my power was gone. Do you know what we are, we, who are reckoned the pillars of society? We are the tools of society, neither more nor less.

LONA.

Why do you only see this now?

BERNICK.

Because I have been thinking much of late—since you came home—and most of all this evening.—Oh, Lona, why did I not know you through and through, then—in the old days?

LONA.

What then?

BERNICK.

I should never have given you up; and, with you by my side, I should not have stood where I stand now.

LONA.

And do you never think what she might have been to you—she, whom you chose in my stead?

BERNICK.

I know, at any rate, that she has not been anything that I required.

LONA.

Because you have never shared your life-work with her. Because you have never placed her in a free and true relation to you. Because you have allowed her to go on pining under the weight of shame you had cast upon those nearest her.

BERNICK.

Yes, yes, yes; falsehood and hollowness are at the bottom of it all.

LONA.

Then why not break with all this falsehood and hollowness?

BERNICK.

Now? It is too late now, Lona.

LONA.

Karsten, tell me—what satisfaction does this show and imposture give you?

BERNICK.

It gives m e none. I must go under, along with the whole of this bungled social system. But a new generation will grow up after us; it is my son that I am working for; it is h i s life-work that I am laying out for him. There will come a time when truth will find its way into our social order, and upon it he shall found a happier life than his father's.

LONA.

With a lie for its groundwork? Think what it is you are giving your son for an inheritance.

BERNICK.

[*With suppressed despair.*] I am giving him an inheritance a thousand times worse than you know of. But, sooner or later, the curse must pass away. And yet —and yet—— [*Vehemently.*] How could you bring all this upon my head! But it is done now. I must go on now. You s h a l l not succeed in crushing me!

HILMAR TÖNNESEN, *with an open note in his hand, and much discomposed, enters quickly from the right.*

HILMAR.

Why, this is—— Betty, Betty!

BERNICK.

What now? Are they coming already?

HILMAR.

No, no; but I must speak to some one at once——

[*He goes out by the second door on the left.*

LONA.

Karsten, you say we came to crush you. Then let me tell you what stuff he is made of, this prodigal whom your moral society shrinks from as if he were plague-stricken. He can do without you all, for he has gone away.

BERNICK.

But he is coming back——

LONA.

Johan will never come back. He has gone for ever, and Dina has gone with him.

BERNICK.

Gone for ever? And Dina with him?

LONA.

Yes, to be his wife. That is how these two strike your seraphic society in the face, as I once—— No matter!

BERNICK.

Gone!—she too! In the *Indian Girl?*

LONA.

No; he dared not entrust such a precious freight to a ship with so ruffianly a crew. Johan and Dina have sailed in the *Palm Tree.*

BERNICK.

Ah! Then it was—to no purpose—— [*Rushes to the door of his office, tears it open, and calls in.*] Krap, stop the *Indian Girl!* She mustn't sail to-night!

KRAP.

[*Inside.*] The *Indian Girl* is already standing out to sea, Consul.

BERNICK.

[*Shuts the door and says feebly.*] Too late—and all for nothing.

LONA.

What do you mean?

BERNICK.

Nothing, nothing. Leave me alone——!

LONA.

H'm. Listen, Karsten. Johan told me to tell you that he leaves in my keeping the good name he once lent you, and also that which you stole from him while he was far away. Johan will be silent; and I can do or let alone in this matter as I will. See, I hold in my hand your two letters.

BERNICK.

You have them! And now—now you will—this very night perhaps—when the procession——

LONA.

I did not come here to unmask you, but to try if I could not move you to throw off the mask of your own accord. I have failed. Remain standing in the lie. See; I tear your two letters to shreds. Take the pieces; here they are. Now, there is nothing to bear witness against you, Karsten. Now you are safe; be happy too—if you can.

BERNICK.

[*Profoundly moved.*] Lona, why did you not do this before! It is too late now; my whole life is ruined now; I cannot live after to-day.

LONA.

What has happened?

BERNICK.

Don't ask me. And yet I m u s t live! I w i l l live —for Olaf's sake. He shall restore all and atone for all——

LONA.

Karsten——!

HILMAR TÖNNESEN *again enters hurriedly.*

HILMAR.

No one to be found; all away; not even Betty!

BERNICK.

What is the matter with you?

HILMAR.

I daren't tell you.

BERNICK.

What is it? You must and shall tell me.

HILMAR.

Well then—— Olaf has run away in the *Indian Girl*.

BERNICK.

[*Staggering backwards.*] Olaf—in the *Indian Girl!* No, no!

LONA.

Yes, it is true! Now I understand—— I saw him jump out of the window.

BERNICK.

[*At the door of his room, calls out in despair.*] Krap, stop the *Indian Girl* at any cost!

KRAP.

[*Comes into the room.*] Impossible, Consul. How should we be able to——

BERNICK.

We m u s t stop her! Olaf is on board!

KRAP.

What!

RUMMEL.

[*Enters from the office.*] Olaf run away? Impossible!

SANDSTAD.

[*Enters from the office.*] They'll send him back with the pilot, Consul.

HILMAR.

No, no; he has written to me. [*Showing the letter.*] He says he's going to hide among the cargo until they are fairly out to sea.

BERNICK.

I shall never see him again!

RUMMEL.

Oh, nonsense; a good stout ship, newly repaired——

VIGELAND.

[*Who has also come in.*] ——and in your own yard, too, Consul.

BERNICK.

I shall never see him again, I tell you. I have lost him, Lona; and—I see it now—he has never been really mine. [*Listens.*] What is that?

RUMMEL.

Music. The procession is coming.

BERNICK.

I cannot, I will not see any one!

RUMMEL.

What are you thinking of? It's impossible——

SANDSTAD.

Impossible, Consul; think how much you have at stake.

BERNICK.

What does it all matter to me now? Whom have I now to work for?

RUMMEL.

Can you ask? You have us and society.

VIGELAND.

Yes, very true.

SANDSTAD.

And surely, Consul, you don't forget that we——

MARTHA *enters by the second door on the left.*
Music is heard, from far down the street.

MARTHA.

Here comes the procession; but Betty is not at home; I can't think where she——

BERNICK.

Not at home! There, you see, Lona; no support either in joy or sorrow.

RUMMEL.

Back with the curtains! Come and help me, Mr. Krap! You too, Sandstad! What a terrible pity that the family should be scattered just at this moment! Quite against the programme.

[*The curtains over the door and windows are drawn back. The whole street is seen to be illuminated. On the house opposite is a large transparency with the inscription,* "Long live Karsten Bernick, the

BERNICK.

Away with the mocking words, I say! Can you not see, all these lights are gibing at us?

RUMMEL.

Well, I must say——

BERNICK.

Oh, you know nothing——! But I, I——! They are the lights in a dead-room!

KRAP.

H'm——!

RUMMEL.

Come now, really—you make far too much of it.

SANDSTAD.

The boy will have a trip over the Atlantic, and then you'll have him back again.

VIGELAND.

Only put your trust in the Almighty, Consul.

RUMMEL.

And in the ship, Bernick; she's seaworthy enough, I'm sure.

KRAP.

H'm——

RUMMEL.

Now, if it were one of those floating coffins we hear of in the great nations——

BERNICK.

I can feel my very hair growing grey.

MRS. BERNICK, *with a large shawl over her he comes through the garden door.*

MRS. BERNICK

Karsten, Karsten, do you know——?

BERNICK.

Yes, I know——; but you—you who can see no —you who have not a mother's care for him——!

MRS. BERNICK.

Oh, listen to me——!

BERNICK.

Why did you not watch over him? Now I hav him. Give him back to me, if you can!

MRS. BERNICK.

I can, I can; I have him!

BERNICK.

You have him!

THE MEN.

Ah!

HILMAR.

Ah, I thought so.

MARTHA.

Now you have him again, Karsten.

LONA.

Yes; now win him as well.

BERNICK.

You have him! Can this be true? Where is he?

MRS. BERNICK.

I shall not tell you until you have forgiven him.

BERNICK.

Oh, forgiven, forgiven——! But how did you come to know——?

MRS. BERNICK.

Do you think a mother has no eyes? I was in mortal terror lest you should hear of it. A few words he let fall yesterday——; and his room being empty, and his knapsack and clothes gone——

BERNICK.

Yes, yes——?

MRS. BERNICK.

I ran; I got hold of Aune; we went out in his sailing-boat; the American ship was on the point of sailing. Thank Heaven, we arrived in time—we got on board—we searched in the hold—and we found him. Oh, Karsten, you mustn't punish him!

BERNICK.

Betty!

MRS. BERNICK.

Nor Aune either!

BERNICK.

Aune? What of him? Is the *Indian Girl* under sail again?

MRS. BERNICK.

No, that is just the thing——

BERNICK.

Speak, speak!

MRS. BERNICK.

Aune was as terrified as I was; the search took some time; darkness came on, and the pilot made objections: so Aune ventured—in your name——

BERNICK.

Well?

MRS. BERNICK.

To stop the ship till to-morrow.

KRAP.

H'm——

BERNICK.

Oh, what unspeakable happiness!

MRS. BERNICK.

You are not angry?

BERNICK.

Oh, what surpassing happiness, Betty!

RUMMEL.

Why, you're absurdly nervous.

HILMAR.

Yes; the moment it comes to a little struggle with the elements—ugh!

KRAP.

[*At the window.*] The procession is coming through the garden gate, Consul.

BERNICK.

Yes, now let them come!

RUMMEL.

The whole garden is full of people.

SANDSTAD.

The very street is packed.

RUMMEL.

The whole town has turned out, Bernick. This is really an inspiring moment.

VIGELAND.

Let us take it in a humble spirit, Mr. Rummel.

RUMMEL.

All the banners are out. What a procession! Ah, here's the Committee, with Doctor Rörlund at its head.

BERNICK.

Let them come, I say!

RUMMEL.

But look here: in your agitated state of mind——

BERNICK.

What then?

RUMMEL.

Why, I should have no objection to speaking for

BERNICK.

No, thank you; to-night I shall speak myself.

RUMMEL.

But do you know what you have got to say?

BERNICK.

Yes, don't be alarmed, Rummel—now I know wh have to say.

[*The music has meanwhile ceased. The garden is thrown open.* DOCTOR RÖRLUND *enters a head of the Committee, accompanied by two po carrying a covered basket. After them come to people of all classes, as many as the room will An immense crowd, with banners and flags, be seen in the garden and in the street.*

RÖRLUND.

Consul Bernick! I see from the surprise depicte your countenance, that it is as unexpected guests

we intrude upon you in your happy family circle, at your peaceful hearth, surrounded by upright and public-spirited friends and fellow citizens. Our excuse is that we obey a heartfelt impulse in bringing you our homage. It is not, indeed, the first time we have done so, but the first time on so comprehensive a scale. We have often expressed to you our gratitude for the broad moral basis upon which you have, so to speak, built up our society. This time we chiefly hail in you the clear-sighted, indefatigable, unselfish, nay, self-sacrificing citizen, who has taken the initiative in an undertaking which, we are credibly assured, will give a powerful impetus to the temporal prosperity and wellbeing of this community.

VOICES.

[*Among the crowd.*] Bravo, bravo!

RÖRLUND.

Consul Bernick, you have for many years stood before our town as a shining example. I do not here speak of your exemplary domestic life, your spotless moral record. To such virtues we pay tribute in the secret chamber of the heart; we do not proclaim them from the house-tops. I speak rather of your activity as a citizen, as it lies open to all men's view. Well-appointed ships sail from your wharves, and fly our flag on the furthest seas. A large and prosperous body of workmen looks up to you as to a father. By calling into existence new branches of industry, you have brought comfort into hundreds of homes. In other words—you are in an eminent sense the pillar and corner-stone of this community.

VOICES.

Hear, hear! Bravo!

RÖRLUND.

And it is the halo of disinterestedness resting upon all your actions that is so unspeakably beneficent, especially in these times. You are now on the point of procuring for us—I do not hesitate to say the word plainly and prosaically—a railway.

MANY VOICES.

Bravo, bravo!

RÖRLUND.

But this undertaking seems destined to meet with difficulties, principally arising from narrow and selfish interests.

VOICES.

Hear, hear! Hear, hear!

RÖRLUND.

It is no longer unknown that certain individuals, not

DIFFERENT VOICES.

H'm! No, no! Yes, yes!

RÖRLUND.

We have assembled, then, this evening to do homage, in your person, to the ideal citizen—the model of all the civic virtues. May your enterprise contribute to the true and lasting welfare of this community! The railway is, no doubt, an institution by means of which elements of evil may be imported from without, but it is also an institution that enables us to get quickly rid of them. From elements of evil from without we cannot even now keep ourselves quite free. But if, as I hear, we have, just on this auspicious evening, been unexpectedly relieved of certain elements of this nature——

VOICES.

Sh, sh!

RÖRLUND.

——I accept the fact as a good omen, for the undertaking. If I touch upon this point h e r e, it is because we know ourselves to be in a house where family ties are subordinated to the ethical ideal.

VOICES.

Hear, hear! Bravo!

BERNICK.

[*At the same time.*] Permit me——

RÖRLUND.

Only a few words more, Consul Bernick. Your labours on behalf of this community have certainly not been

[*He gives the porters a sign*
basket; members of the
present, during the follo
mentioned.

RÖRLUNI

Therefore, I have now, Cons
a silver coffee service. Let it gr
in future, as so often in the pa
meeting under this hospitable r

And you, too, gentlemen, wh
operated with the first man of o
beg to accept some trifling mem
let we tender to you, Mr. Rum
time, amid the ring of wine-cups
words for the civic interests of o
often find worthy opportunities
goblet.—To you, Mr. Sandstad,
photographs of your fellow citi
and much-appreciated philanthr
happy position of counting amon
of all sections of the community.-
land, I have to offer, for the dec
sanctum, this book of family d

point; your activity in the daily affairs of this world has long been purified and ennobled by thoughts of things higher and holier. [*Turns towards the Crowd.*] And now, my friends, long live Consul Bernick and his fellow workers! Hurrah for the Pillars of Society!

THE WHOLE CROWD.

Long live Consul Bernick! Long live the Pillars of Society! Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!

LONA.

I congratulate you, brother-in-law!

[*An expectant silence intervenes.*

BERNICK.

[*Begins earnestly and slowly.*] My fellow citizens,—your spokesman has said that we stand this evening on the threshold of a new era; and there, I hope, he was right. But in order that it may be so, we must bring home to ourselves the truth—the truth which has, until this evening, been utterly and in all things banished from our community. [*Astonishment among the audience.*

BERNICK.

I must begin by repudiating the panegyric with which you, Dr. Rörlund, according to use and wont on such occasions, have overwhelmed me. I do not deserve it; for until to-day I have not been disinterested in my dealings. If I have not always striven for pecuniary profit, at least I am now conscious that a desire, a craving, for power, influence, and respect has been the motive of most of my actions.

RUMMEL.

[*Half aloud.*] What next?

BERNICK.

Before my fellow citizens I do not reproach myself for this; for I still believe that I may claim a place among the foremost of our men of practical usefulness.

MANY VOICES.

Yes, yes, yes!

BERNICK.

What I do blame myself for is my weakness in constantly adopting indirect courses, because I knew and feared the tendency of our society to suspect impure motives behind everything a man undertakes. And now I come to a case in point.

RUMMEL

[*Anxiously.*] H'm—h'm!

BERNICK.

There are rumours abroad of great purchases of property along the projected line. This property I have bought—all of it—I alone.

SUPPRESSED VOICES.

What does he say? The Consul? Consul Bernick?

BERNICK.

It is for the present in my hands. Of course, I have confided in my fellow workers, Messrs. Rummel, Vigeland, and Sandstad, and we have agreed to——

RUMMEL.

It's not true! Prove!—prove——!

VIGELAND.

We have not agreed to anything!

SANDSTAD.

Well, I must say——

BERNICK.

Quite right; we have not yet agreed on what I was about to mention. But I am confident that these three gentlemen will acquiesce when I say that I have this evening determined to form a joint-stock company for the exploitation of these properties; whoever will can have shares in it.

MANY VOICES.

Hurrah! Long live Consul Bernick!

RUMMEL.

[*Aside to* BERNICK.] Such base treachery——!

SANDSTAD.

[*Likewise.*] Then you've been fooling us——!

VIGELAND.

Why then, devil take——! Oh, Lord, what am I saying!

THE CROWD.

[*Outside.*] Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!

BERNICK.

Silence, gentlemen. I have no right to this homage; for what I have now determined was not my original intention. My intention was to retain the whole myself; and I am still of opinion that the property can be most profitably worked if it remains in the control of one man. But it is for the shareholders to choose. If they wish it, I am willing to manage it for them to the best of my ability.

VOICES.

Yes, yes, yes!

BERNICK.

But, first, my fellow citizens must know me to the core. Then let every one look into his own heart, and let us realise the prediction that from this evening we begin a new era. The old, with its tinsel, its hypocrisy and hollowness, its sham propriety, and its despicable cowardice, shall lie behind us like a museum, open for instruction; and to this museum we will present—will we not, gentlemen?—the coffee service, and the goblet, and the album, and the family devotions on vellum and luxuriously bound.

RUMMEL.

Yes, of course.

VIGELAND.

[*Mutters.*] When you've taken all the rest, why——

SANDSTAD.

As you please.

BERNICK.

And now to come to the chief point in my settlement with society. It has been said that elements of evil have

left us this evening. I can add what you do not know: the man thus alluded to did not go alone; with him went, to become his wife——

LONA.

[*Loudly.*] Dina Dorf!

RÖRLUND.

What?

MRS. BERNICK.

What do you say? [*Great sensation.*

RÖRLUND.

Fled? Run away—with h i m! Impossible!

BERNICK.

To become his wife, Doctor Rörlund. And I have more to add. [*Aside.*] Betty, collect yourself to bear what is coming. [*Aloud.*] I say: Honour to that man, for he has nobly taken upon himself another's sin. My fellow citizens, I will get clear of the lie; it has gone near to poisoning every fibre in my being. You shall know all. Fifteen years ago, it was *I* who sinned.

MRS. BERNICK.

[*In a low and trembling voice.*] Karsten!

MARTHA.

[*Likewise.*] Ah, Johan——!

LONA.

At last you have found your true self!

[*Speechless astonishment among the listeners.*

BERNICK.

Yes, my fellow citizens, I was guilty, and he fled. The false and vile rumours which were afterwards current, it is now in no human power to disprove. But of this I cannot complain. Fifteen years ago I swung myself aloft by aid of these rumours; whether I am now to fall with them is for you to decide.

RÖRLUND.

What a thunderbolt! The first man in the town——! [*Softly to* MRS. BERNICK.] Oh, how I pity you, Mrs. Bernick!

HILMAR.

Such a confession! Well, I must say——

BERNICK.

But do not decide this evening. I ask every one of you to go home—to collect himself—to look into himself. When your minds are calm again, it will be seen whether I have lost or gained by speaking out. Good-night! I have still much, very much, to repent of, but that concerns only my own conscience. Good-night! Away with all this show! We all feel that it is out of place here.

RÖRLUND.

Assuredly it is. [*Softly to* MRS. BERNICK.] Run away! So, after all, she was quite unworthy of me.

[*Half aloud, to the Committee.*] Yes, gentlemen, after this, I think we had better withdraw as quickly as possible.

HILMAR.

How, after this, one is to hold high the banner of the ideal, I for one—— Ugh!

[*The announcement has meanwhile been whispered from mouth to mouth. All the members of the procession retire through the garden.* RUMMEL, SANDSTAD, *and* VIGELAND *go off disputing earnestly but softly.* HILMAR TÖNNESEN *slips out to the right.* CONSUL BERNICK, MRS. BERNICK, MARTHA, LONA, *and* KRAP *alone remain in the room. There is a short silence.*

BERNICK.

Betty, can you forgive me?

MRS. BERNICK.

[*Looks smilingly at him.*] Do you know, Karsten, you have made me feel happier and more hopeful than I have felt for many years?

BERNICK.

How so?

MRS. BERNICK.

For many years I have thought that you had once been mine, and I had lost you. Now I know that you never were mine; but I shall win you.

BERNICK.

[*Embracing her.*] Oh, Betty, you have won me! Through Lona I have at last learnt really to know you. But now let Olaf come.

MRS. BERNICK.

Yes, now you shall have him. Mr. Krap——

[*She whispers to him in the background. H*
out by the garden door. During the follow
the transparencies and lights in the hou
gradually extinguished.

BERNICK.

[*Softly.*] Thanks, Lona; you have saved what
in me—and for me.

LONA.

What else did I intend?

BERNICK.

Yes, what—what did you intend? I cannot
you.

LONA.

H'm——

BERNICK.

It was not hatred then? Not revenge? Why
come over?

LONA.

Old friendship does not rust.

BERNICK.

Lona!

LONA.

When Johan told me all that about the lie, I s
myself: The hero of my youth shall stand free a

BERNICK.

Oh, how little has a pitiful creature like me deserved this of you!

LONA.

Yes, if we women always asked for deserts Karsten——

AUNE *and* OLAF *enter from the garden.*

BERNICK.

[*Rushing to him.*] Olaf!

OLAF.

Father, I promise never to do it again.

BERNICK.

To run away?

OLAF.

Yes, yes. I promise, father.

BERNICK.

And I promise that you shall never have reason to. In future you shall be allowed to grow up, not as the heir to my life-work, but as one who has a life-work of his own to look forward to.

OLAF.

And will you let me be whatever I want to?

BERNICK.

Whatever you like.

OLAF.

Thank you, father. Then I won't be a pillar of society.

BERNICK.

Ah! Why not?

OLAF.

Oh, I think it must be so tiresome.

BERNICK.

You shall be yourself, Olaf; and we won't trouble about anything else. And you, Aune——

AUNE.

I know it, Consul: I am dismissed.

BERNICK.

We will not part company, Aune; and forgive me——

AUNE.

What? The ship can't get away to-night.

BERNICK.

Nor yet to-morrow. I gave you too little time. She must be overhauled more thoroughly.

AUNE

She shall be, Consul—and with the new machines!

BERNICK.

So be it—but thoroughly and honestly, mind. There are a good many things here that need thorough and honest overhauling. So good-night, Aune.

AUNE.

Good-night, Consul—and thank you heartily.

[*He goes out to the right.*

MRS. BERNICK.

Now they are all gone.

BERNICK.

And we are alone. My name no longer shines in the transparencies; all the lights are out in the windows.

LONA.

Would you have them lighted again?

BERNICK.

Not for all the world. Where have I been? You will be horrified when you know. I am feeling now as if I had just come to my senses again after being poisoned. But I feel—I feel that I c a n be young and strong again. Oh, come nearer—closer around me. Come, Betty! Come, Olaf! Come, Martha! Oh, Martha, it seems as though I had never seen you during all these years.

LONA.

No, I daresay not; your society is a society of bachelor-souls; you have no eyes for womanhood.

BERNICK.

True, true. And for that very reason—it is settled, Lona, is it not?—you won't leave Betty and me?

MRS. BERNICK.

No, Lona; you must not!

LONA.

No; how could I think of going away and leaving you young people, just beginning life? Am I not your foster mother? You and I, Martha, we are the two old aunts—— What are you looking at?

MARTHA.

How the sky is clearing; how it grows light over the sea. The *Palm Tree* has fortune with it——

LONA.

And happiness on board.

BERNICK.

And we—we have a long, earnest day of work before us; I most of all. But let it come! Gather close around me, you true and faithful women. I have learnt this, in these days: it is you women who are the pillars of society.

LONA.

you have learnt a poor wisdom, brother-in-law.
er hand firmly upon his shoulder.] No, no; the
of Truth and Freedom—t h e s e are the Pillars
ty.

THE END.

ROSMERSHOLM

THE LADY FROM THE SEA

CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION TO "ROSMERSHOLM" 3

"ROSMERSHOLM" 17

Translated by CHARLES ARCHER

INTRODUCTION TO "THE LADY FROM THE SEA" . 199

"THE LADY FROM THE SEA" 211

Translated by MRS. FRANCES E. ARCHER

ROSMERSHOLM

INTRODUCTION *

No one who ever saw Henrik Ibsen, in his later years at any rate, could doubt that he was a born aristocrat. It is said that a change came over his appearance and manner after the publication of *Brand*—that he then put off the Bohemian and put on the reserved, correct, punctilious man-of-the-world. When I first saw him in 1881, he had the air of a polished statesman or diplomatist. Distinction was the note of his personality. So early as 1872, he had written to George Brandes, who was then involved in one of his many controversies, "Be dignified! Dignity is the only weapon against such assaults." His actual words, *Vær fornem!* mean, literally translated, "Be distinguished!" No democratic movement which implied a levelling-down, could ever command Ibsen's sympathy. He was a leveller-up, or nothing.

This deep-rooted trait in his character found its supreme expression in *Rosmersholm*.

One of his first remarks (to Brandes, January 3, 1882) after the storm had broken out over *Ghosts* was: "I feel most painfully affected by the crudity, the plebeian element in all our public discussion. The very praiseworthy attempt to make of our people a democratic community

* Copyright, 1907, by Charles Scribner's Sons

has inadvertently gone a good way towards making us a plebeian community. Distinction of soul seems to be on the decline at home." The same trend of thought makes itself felt again and again in Dr. Stockmann's great speech in the fourth act of *An Enemy of the People;* but it appears only incidentally in that play, and not at all in *The Wild Duck*. It was a visit which he paid to Norway in the summer of 1885 that brought the need for "ennoblement" of character into the foreground of his thought, and inspired him with the idea of *Rosmersholm*. "Since he had last been home," writes Henrik Jæger, "the great political battle had been fought out, and had left behind it a fanaticism and bitterness of spirit which astounded him. He was struck by the brutality of the prevailing tone; he felt himself painfully affected by the rancorous and vulgar personalities which drowned all rational discussion of the principles at stake; and he observed with sorrow the many enmities to which the contest had given rise. . . . On the whole, he received the impression—as he remarked in conversation—that Norway was inhabited, not by two million human beings, but by two million cats and dogs. This impression has recorded itself in the picture of party divisions presented in *Rosmersholm*. The bitterness of the vanquished is admirably embodied in Rector Kroll; while the victors' craven reluctance to speak out their whole hearts is excellently characterised in the freethinker and opportunist, Mortensgård."

What was this "great political battle," the echoes of which reverberate through *Rosmersholm*? Though a knowledge of its details is in no way essential to the com-

prehension of the play, the following account[1] of it may not be out of place.

The Norwegian Constitution of 1814 gave the King of Norway and Sweden a suspensive veto on the enactments of the Norwegian Storthing, or Parliament, but provided that a bill passed by three successive triennial Storthings should become law without the Royal assent. This arrangement worked well enough until about 1870, when the Liberal party became alive to a flaw in the Constitution. The whole legislative and financial power was vested in the Storthing; but the Ministers had no seats in it and acknowledged no responsibility save to the King. Thus the overwhelming Liberal majority in the Storthing found itself baulked at every turn by a Conservative ministry, over which it had no effective control. In 1872, a Bill enacting that Ministers should sit in the Storthing was passed by 80 votes to 29, and was vetoed by the King. It was passed again and again by successive Storthings, the last time by 93 votes to 20; but now King Oscar came forward with a declaration that *on matters affecting the Constitution* his veto was not suspensive, but absolute, and once more vetoed the Bill. This measure was met by the Storthing with a resolution (June 9, 1880) that the Act had become law in spite of the veto. The King ignored the resolution, and, by the advice of his Ministers, claimed an absolute veto, not only on constitutional questions, but on measures of supply. Then the Storthing adopted the last resource provided by the Constitution: it impeached the Ministers before the Supreme Court

[1] Condensed from an article in the *Fortnightly Review*, September, 1885.

of the kingdom. Political rancour ran incredibly high, and there was a great final tussle over the composition of the Supreme Court; but the Liberals were masters of the situation, and carried all before them. One by one the Ministers were dismissed from office and fined. The King ostentatiously testified his sympathy with them, and selected a new Ministry from the Extreme Right. They failed to carry on the government of the country, and matters were at a deadlock. At last, however, King Oscar gave way. On June 26, 1884, he sent for Johan Sverdrup, the statesman who for a quarter of a century had guided the counsels of the Liberal party. Sverdrup consented to form a Ministry, and the battle ended in a Liberal victory along the whole line.

Ten years elapsed between Ibsen's hegira of 1864 and his first brief return to his native land. Before his second visit eleven more years intervened; and during the summer of 1885, which he spent for the most part at Molde, he found the air still quivering with the rancours begotten of the great struggle. In a speech which he addressed to a meeting of workmen at Trondhjem (June 14, 1885) he said that the years of his absence had brought "immense progress in most directions," but that he was disappointed to observe that "the most indispensable individual rights were far less secured than he had hoped and expected to find them under the new order of things." He found neither freedom of thought nor freedom of speech beyond a limit arbitrarily fixed by the dominant majority. "There remains much to be done," he continued, "before we can be said to have attained real liberty. But I fear that our present democracy will not be

equal to the task. An element of *nobility* must be introduced into our national life, into our Parliament, and into our Press. Of course it is not nobility of birth that I am thinking of, nor of money, nor yet of knowledge, nor even of ability and talent: I am thinking of nobility of character, of will, of soul."

When he spoke these words he had been little more than a week in Norway; but it is clear that *Rosmersholm* was already germinating in his mind.

On his return to Munich he began to think out the play, and on February 14, 1886, he wrote to Carl Snoilsky, the Swedish poet: "I am much taken up with a new play, which I have long had in mind, and for which I made careful studies during my visit to Norway." It may be mentioned that Ibsen had met Snoilsky at Molde during the previous summer, and that they had seen a good deal of each other. The manuscript of *Rosmersholm* was sent to the printers at the end of September, 1886, and a letter to Hegel accompanied it in which Ibsen said: "So far as I can see, the play is not likely to call forth attacks from any quarter; but I hope it will lead to lively discussion. I look for this especially in Sweden." Why in Sweden? Perhaps because, as we shall see presently, the story was partly suggested by a recent episode in Swedish social history. Before proceeding to the question of origins, however, I may quote the only other reference to the play, of any importance, which occurs in Ibsen's letters. The chairman of a debating club in Christiania had addressed to the poet a letter on behalf of the club, which apparently contained some question or suggestion as to the fundamental idea of the play. Ibsen's answer was dated Mu-

nich, February 13, 1887. "The call to work," he said, "is certainly distinguishable throughout *Rosmersholm*. But the play also deals with the struggle with himself which every serious-minded man must face in order to bring his life into harmony with his convictions. For the different spiritual functions do not develop evenly and side by side in any given human being. The acquisitive instinct hastens on from conquest to conquest. The moral consciousness, the conscience, on the other hand is very conservative. It has deep roots in tradition and the past generally. Hence arises the conflict in the individual. But first and foremost, of course, the play is a creative work, dealing with human beings and human destinies."

Dr. George Brandes is our authority for associating *Rosmersholm* with the social episode above alluded to —an episode which came within Ibsen's ken just while the play was in process of gestation. A Swedish nobleman, personally known to Ibsen, and remarkable for that amenity and distinction of manner which he attributes to Rosmer, had been unhappily married to a lady who shared none of his interests, and was intellectually quite unsympathetic to him. Much more sympathetic was a female relative of his wife's. The relation between them attracted attention, and (as in *Rosmersholm*) was the subject of venomous paragraphs in the local Press. Count Blank left his home and went abroad, was joined by the sympathetic cousin, resigned the high office which he held in his native country, and returned to his wife the fortune she had brought him. Shortly afterwards the Countess died of consumption, which was, of course, supposed to have been accelerated by her husband's misconduct

The use that Ibsen made of this unhappy story affords a perfect example of the working-up of raw material in the factory of genius. Not one of the traits that constitute the originality and greatness of the play is to be found in the actual circumstances. He remodelled the whole episode; it was plastic as a sculptor's clay in his hands; but doubtless it did give him something to seize upon and re-create. For the character of Rebecca, it is believed (on rather inadequate grounds, it seems to me) that Ibsen borrowed some traits from Charlotte Stieglitz, who committed suicide in 1834, in the vain hope of stimulating the intellectual activity of her husband, a minor poet.[1] For Ulric Brendel, Dr. Brahm relates that Ibsen found a model in an eccentric "dream-genius" known to him in Italy, who created only in his mind, and despised writing. But Brendel is so clearly a piece of the poet's own "devilment" as he used to call it, that it is rather idle to look for his "original." The scene of the play is said to have been suggested to Ibsen by an old family seat near Molde. Be this as it may, Dr. Brandes is certainly mistaken in declaring that there is no such "castle" as Rosmersholm in Norway, and thence arguing that Ibsen had begun to write for a cosmopolitan rather than a Norwegian audience. Rosmersholm is not a "castle" at all; and old houses such as Ibsen describes are far from uncommon.

The *Literary Remains* enable us to trace Rosmersholm to its completion from a very embryonic form. It was

[1] See note (in the Norwegian and German editions) to Ibsen's *Letters*, No. 146. As to Charlotte Stieglitz, see Brandes' *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature*, vol. vi., p 296.

at first to have been called *White Horses*. Here is the earliest memorandum for it:—

HE, the delicate, distinguished nature, who has gone over to a liberal (literally, "free-minded") standpoint, and from whom all his former friends and acquaintances have drawn back. Widower: has been unhappily married to a melancholic, half-mad wife, who at last drowned herself.

SHE: his two daughters' governess, emancipated, warm-blooded, somewhat unscrupulous, but in a refined way. Is regarded by the neighbourhood as the evil genius of the house: is the object of misinterpretation and backbiting.

THE ELDER DAUGHTER: is on the point of breaking down through loneliness and want of occupation: rich endowment with no outlet for it.

THE YOUNGER DAUGHTER: observant, budding passions.

THE JOURNALIST; genius, vagabond.

It is evident that the poet had as yet no idea of the terrible tragedy of Rebecca's relation to Beata; he could scarcely have described as "somewhat unscrupulous" a woman who, under the mask of friendship, goaded another to suicide. Rosmer's two daughters, we see, disappeared from Rosmersholm, to reappear in *The Lady from the Sea*, as Boletta and Hilda Wangel.

Ibsen fumbled around a good deal for the names in this play. Rosmer appears at first as "Boldt-Römer," and then, without any warning, he changes into "Rosenhielm." Rebecca is at first "Miss Badeck" or "Radeck." Then there was a period during which she was

married to Rosmer. Through an act and a half she figures as "Mrs. Rosmer"; and then, in the middle of a draft of the second act she suddenly comes unmarried again and is called "Miss Dankert." While she was Mrs. Rosmer, her Christian name was "Agatha"; in the "Miss Dankert" stage it was Rebecca; not until the third act is reached does she become Rebecca West. Kroll was at first to have been called Hekmann; then he became "Rector Gylling," a patently inappropriate name, inasmuch as it suggests the Norwegian word for "chicken." Ulric Brendel, in one stage of incubation, adopted Rosmer's cast-off name of "Rosenhielm"; and somewhat later he became "Seierhielm."

In the earliest draft of the first act that has come down to us, Rosmer (as Boldt-Römer) speaks to Miss Radeck about his daughters, saying that he does not like the idea of their skating on the mill-dam where their mother was drowned, even though they themselves are ignorant of the fact. Then Kroll (as Hekmann) enters, and remonstrates with him for resigning his pastorate; but the fragment breaks off before Rosmer (now Rosenhielm) has confessed his "apostasy." Of a later and more developed draft we have two acts practically complete. It is in this phase that Rebecca is first "Mrs. Rosmer" and then "Miss Dankert." The two daughters have by this time disappeared; but Rosmer says to Gylling (Kroll), "We do not find it painful to dwell on the thought either of Agneta (Beata) or of little Alfred." This is the only allusion to "little Alfred," and we cannot say with certainty what was in Ibsen's mind when he wrote it. Can he have intended that the dead wife should have had a child, and should have taken the child with her into the mill-race?

For the rest, the lines of the completed play seem by this time to be pretty clear in the poet's mind, but its structure is still flaccid and in need of stern compression. It is significant that Rosmer does not, in the first act, confess to Kroll his change of heart. He is on the point of doing so when he is interrupted by the entrance of Rosenhielm (Brendel). The confession being thus deferred till the second act, the first act ends (like the first act of *Pillars of Society*) without any clear announcement of the coming struggle. The student of technique may learn an invaluable lesson in noting the enormous improvement effected by the transference of Rosmer's avowal from the second to the first act. After the draft second act, the further drafts became fragmentary, and are all very much on the lines of the completed play. The one exception may be found in an alternative version of the first Brendel scene, in which Brendel (at this stage called Hetman) expresses his intention of preaching land nationalisation, and is greatly cast down on learning that his theories have been anticipated in a well-known book—an allusion, no doubt, to Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*. Ibsen showed his usual fine instinct in abandoning this idea.

A still more fortunate change was the remodelling of the passage in which we first hear of the White Horse of Rosmersholm. As it originally stood, it afforded an example of the lapses which would now and then occur in Ibsen's sense of humour:—

MRS. ROSMER (Rebecca). What was that you once told me, Madam Helset? You said that, from time immemorial, something strange happened here at Rosmersholm whenever one of the family died.

MADAM HELSET. Yes, it is as true as I stand here. Then the white horse comes.

ROSMER. Oh, that old family legend——

MRS. ROSMER. In it comes at the dead of night. Into the courtyard. Through the closed gate. Neighs loudly. Kicks up its hind legs, gallops once round, and then out again at a tearing gallop?

MADAM HELSET. Yes, that's just how it is. Both my mother and my grandmother have seen it.

Unless we are to suppose that Rebecca is deliberately burlesquing the superstition, the white horse which kicks up its hind legs must be classed with the steamboat in *Little Eyolf* which has "one red eye and one green." But, unlike the steamboat, the kicking horse did not pursue its mad career into the finished play.

Published on November 23, 1886, *Rosmersholm* was first acted in Bergen in January, 1887, in Gothenburg in March, in Christiania and Stockholm not till April. Copenhagen did not see it until November, 1887, when it was acted by a Swedish travelling company. Its first production in Germany took place at Augsburg in April, 1887, the poet himself being present. It was produced in Berlin in May, 1887, in Vienna not till May, 1893. There are few of the leading German theatres where it has not been acted, and has not taken a more or less prominent place in the repertory. In Germany indeed (though not elsewhere) it seems to rank among Ibsen's most popular works. In London, *Rosmersholm* was first acted at the Vaudeville Theatre on February 23, 1891, Mr. F. R. Benson playing Rosmer, and Miss Florence Farr, Rebecca. Four performances of it were given at the Opera

Comique in 1893, with Mr. Lewis Waller as Rosmer, and Miss Elizabeth Robins as Rebecca. In 1892, a writer who adopted the pseudonym of "Austin Fryers" produced, at the Globe Theatre, a play called *Beata*, which purported to be a "prologue" to *Rosmersholm*—the drama which Ibsen (perversely, in Mr. Fryers' judgment) chose to narrate instead of exhibiting it in action. Not until 1893 was *Rosmersholm* produced in Paris, by the company entitled "L'Œuvre," under the direction of M. Lugné Poé. This company afterwards acted it in London and in many other cities—among the rest in Christiania. In Italy, Eleonora Duse added the play to her repertory, with scenery designed by Mr. Gordon Craig. In America Rebecca has been acted with great success by Mrs. Fiske.

With *Rosmersholm* we reach the end of the series of social dramas which began seventeen years earlier with *The League of Youth*. In all these plays the individual is treated, more or less explicitly, as a social unit, a member of a class, an example of some collective characteristic, or a victim of some collective superstition, injustice, or stupidity. The plays which follow, on the other hand, beginning with *The Lady from the Sea*, are plays of pure psychology. There are, no doubt, many women like Ellida Wangel or Hedda Gabler; but it is as individuals, not as members of a class, that they interest us; nor is their fate conditioned, like that of Nora or Mrs. Alving, by any social prejudice or pressure. But in *Rosmersholm* man is still considered as a "political animal." The play, as we have seen, actually took its rise as a protest against a morbid condition of the Norwegian public mind, as observed by the poet at a particular point of time. George

Brandes, indeed, has very justly contended that it ought to rank with *An Enemy of the People* and *The Wild Duck* as a direct outcome of that momentous incident in Ibsen's career, the fierce attack upon *Ghosts*. "Rosmer," says Dr. Brandes, "begins where Stockmann left off. He wants to do from the very first what the doctor only wanted to do at the end of *An Enemy of the People*—to make proud, free, noble beings of his countrymen. At the beginning of the play, Rosmer is believed to be a decided Conservative (which the Norwegians considered Ibsen to be for many years after *The League of Youth*), and as long as this view is generally held, he is esteemed and admired, while everything that concerns him is interpreted in the most favourable manner. As soon, however, as his complete intellectual emancipation is discovered, and especially when it appears that he himself does not attempt to conceal the change in his views, public opinion turns against him. . . . Ibsen had been almost as much exposed as Rosmer to every sort of attack for some time after the publication of *Ghosts*, which (from the Conservative point of view) marked his conversion to Radicalism." The analogy between Ibsen's experience and Rosmer's is far too striking not to have been present to the poet's mind.

But, though the play distinctly belongs to the social series, it no less distinctly foreshadows the transition to the psychological series. Rosmer and Rebecca (or I am greatly mistaken) stand out from the social background much more clearly than their predecessors. They seem to grow away from it. At first they are concerned about political duties and social ideals; but, as the action proceeds, all these considerations drop away from them, or

recur but as remembered dreams, and they are a
their tortured souls. Then we cannot but not
trusion of pure poetry—imagination scarcely de
allege a realistic pretext—in the personage
Brendel. He is of the same kindred as the Str
The Lady from the Sea, and the Rat Wife in *Lit*
He marks Ibsen's final rebellion against the pr
strictions which, from *Pillars of Society* onward
striven to impose upon his genius.

He was yet to write plays more fascinating t
mersholm, but none greater in point of technical
It surpasses *The Wild Duck* in the simplicity of
rial, and in that concentration which renders
on the stage, perhaps, a little monotonous, an
tracts from its popularity. In construction it i
marvel of curning complexity. It is the consum
ample in modern times of the retrospective m
which, in ancient times, the consummate exampl
Œdipus Rex. This method has been blamed
critics; but the first great critic of English dra
mended it in the practice of the ancient poets.
set the audience, as it were," says Dryden, "at
where the race is to be concluded." "In unskilful
I have said elsewhere, "the method might dout
come very tedious; but when, as in *Rosmershol*
phase of the retrospect has a definite reaction
drama—the psychological process—actually pa
the stage, the effect attained is surely one of
richness and depth. The drama of the past
drama of the present are interwoven in such a
yet clear and stately harmony as Ibsen himself
often rivalled."

ROSMERSHOLM

(1886)

CHARACTERS

JOHANNES ROSMER, *of Rosmersholm, formerly clergyman of the parish.*
REBECCA WEST, *in charge of Rosmer's household.*
RECTOR[1] KROLL, *Rosmer's brother-in-law.*
ULRIC BRENDEL.
PETER MORTENSGÅRD.[2]
MADAM HELSETH, *housekeeper at Rosmersholm.*

The action takes place at Rosmersholm, an old family seat near a small coast town in the west of Norway.

[1] "Rector" in the Scotch and Continental sense of headmaster of a school, not in the English sense of a beneficed clergyman.
[2] Pronounce *Mortensgore.*

ROSMERSHOLM

PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

ACT FIRST

Sitting-room at Rosmersholm; spacious, old-fashioned, and comfortable. In front, on the right, a stove decked with fresh birch-branches and wild flowers. Farther back, on the same side, a door. In the back wall, folding-doors opening into the hall. To the left, a window, and before it a stand with flowers and plants. Beside the stove a table with a sofa and easy-chairs. On the walls, old and more recent portraits of clergymen, officers, and government officials in uniform. The window is open; so are the door into the hall and the house door beyond. Outside can be seen an avenue of fine old trees, leading up to the house. It is a summer evening, after sunset.

REBECCA WEST *is sitting in an easy-chair by the window, and crocheting a large white woollen shawl, which is nearly finished. She now and then looks out expectantly through the leaves of the plants.* MADAM HELSETH *presently enters from the right.*

MADAM HELSETH.

I suppose I had better begin to lay the table, Miss?

REBECCA WEST.

Yes, please do. The Pastor must soon be in now.

Yes, there is a little draug—
shut the window.

[MADAM HELSETH *shuts the d*
then comes to the window.

MADAM HELSE

[*About to shut the window, looks*
the Pastor over there?

REBECCA.

[*Hastily.*] Where? [*Rises.*] Y
the curtain.] Stand aside—don't l

MADAM HELSE

[*Keeping back from the window.*
he's beginning to take the path by

REBECCA.

He went that way the day before
out between the curtains and the u
us see whether——

MADAM HELS

Will he venture across the foot

MADAM HELSETH.

Dear Lord, yes. No wonder the Pastor thinks twice about setting foot on t h a t bridge. A place where a thing like that has happened——

REBECCA.

[*Folding up her work.*] They cling to their dead here at Rosmersholm.

MADAM HELSETH.

Now *I* would say, Miss, that it's the dead that clings to Rosmersholm.

REBECCA.

[*Looks at her.*] The dead?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, it's almost as if they couldn't tear themselves away from the folk that are left.

REBECCA.

What makes you fancy that?

MADAM HELSETH.

Well, if it wasn't for that, there would be no White Horse, I suppose.

REBECCA.

Now what i s all this about the White Horse, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH.

Oh, I don't like to talk about it. And, besides, you don't believe in such things.

REBECCA.

Do y o u believe in it, then?

MADAM HELSETH.

[*Goes and shuts the window.*] Oh, you'd only be for laughing at me, Miss. [*Looks out.*] Why, isn't that Mr. Rosmer on the mill-path again——?

REBECCA.

[*Looks out.*] That man t h e r e? [*Goes to the window.*] No, that's the Rector!

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, so it is.

REBECCA.

This is delightful. You may be sure he's coming here.

MADAM HELSETH.

He goes straight over the foot-bridge, h e does. And yet she was his sister, his own flesh and blood. Well, I'll go and lay the table then, Miss West.

[*She goes out to the right.* REBECCA *stands at the window for a short time; then smiles and nods to some one outside. It begins to grow dark.*

REBECCA.

[*Goes to the door on the right.*] Oh, Madam Helseth, you might let us have some little extra dish for supper. You know what the Rector likes best.

MADAM HELSETH.

[*Outside.*] Oh yes, Miss, I'll see to it.

REBECCA.

[*Opens the door to the hall.*] At last—! How glad I am to see you, my dear Rector.

RECTOR KROLL.

[*In the hall, laying down his stick.*] Thanks. Then I am not disturbing you?

REBECCA.

You? How can you ask?

KROLL.

[*Comes in.*] Amiable as ever. [*Looks round.*] Is Rosmer upstairs in his room?

REBECCA.

No, he is out walking. He has stayed out rather longer than usual; but he is sure to be in directly. [*Motioning him to sit on the sofa.*] Won't you sit down till he comes?

KROLL.

[*Laying down his hat.*] Many thanks. [*Sits down and looks about him.*] Why, how you have brightened up the old room! Flowers everywhere!

REBECCA.

Mr. Rosmer is so fond of having fresh, growing flowers about him.

KROLL.

And you are too, are you not?

REBECCA.

Yes; they have a delightfully soothing effect on me. We had to do without them though, till lately.

KROLL.

[*Nods sadly.*] Yes, their scent was too much for poor Beata.

REBECCA.

Their colours, too. They quite bewildered her——

KROLL.

I remember, I remember. [*In a lighter tone.*] Well, how are things going out here?

REBECCA.

Oh, everything is going its quiet, jog-trot way. One day is just like another.—And with you? Your wife——?

KROLL.

Ah, my dear Miss West, don't let us talk about my affairs. There is always something or other amiss in a family; especially in times like these.

REBECCA.

[*After a pause, sitting down in an easy-chair beside the sofa.*] How is it you haven't once been near us during the whole of the holidays?

KROLL.

Oh, it doesn't do to make oneself a nuisance——

REBECCA.

If you knew how we have missed you——

KROLL.

And then I have been away——

REBECCA.

Yes, for the last week or two. We have heard of you at political meetings.

KROLL.

[*Nods.*] Yes, what do you say to that? Did you think I would turn political agitator in my old age, eh?

REBECCA.

[*Smiling.*] Well, you have always been a bit of an agitator, Rector Kroll.

KROLL.

Why yes, just for my private amusement. But henceforth it is to be no laughing matter, I can tell you.—Do you ever see those radical newspapers?

REBECCA.

Well yes, my dear Rector, I can't deny that——

KROLL.

My dear Miss West, I have nothing to say against it—nothing in y o u r case.

REBECCA.

No, surely not. One likes to know what's going on—to keep up with the time——

KROLL.

And of course I should not think of expecting you, as a woman, to side actively with either party in the civil contest—I might almost say the civil war—that is raging among us.—But you have seen then, I suppose, how these gentlemen of "the people" have been pleased to treat me? What infamous abuse they have had the audacity to heap on me?

REBECCA.

Yes; but it seems to me you gave as good as you got.

KROLL.

So I did, though I say it that shouldn't. For now I have tasted blood; and they shall soon find to their cost that I am not the man to turn the other cheek—[*Breaks off.*] But come, come—don't let us get upon that subject this evening—it's too painful and irritating.

REBECCA.

Oh no, don't let us talk of it.

KROLL.

Tell me now—how do you get on at Rosmersholm, now that you are alone. Since our poor Beata——

REBECCA.

Thank you, I get on very well. Of course one feels a great blank in many ways—a great sorrow and longing. But otherwise——

KROLL.

And do you think of remaining here?—permanently, I mean.

REBECCA.

My dear Rector, I really haven't thought about it, one way or the other. I have got so used to the place now, that I feel almost as if I belonged to it.

KROLL.

Why, of course you belong to it.

REBECCA.

And so long as Mr. Rosmer finds that I am of any use or comfort to him—why, so long, I suppose, I shall stay here.

KROLL.

[*Looks at her with emotion.*] Do you know,—it is really fine for a woman to sacrifice her whole youth to others as you have done.

REBECCA.

Oh, what else should I have had to live for?

KROLL.

First, there was your untiring devotion to your paralytic and exacting foster-father——

REBECCA.

You mustn't suppose that Dr. West was such a charge when we were up in Finmark. It was those terrible boat-

voyages up there that broke him down. But aft
came here—well yes, the two years before he foun
were certainly hard enough.

KROLL.

And the years that followed—were they not even h
for you?

REBECCA.

Oh how can you say such a thing? When I w
fond of Beata—and when she, poor dear, stood so
in need of care and forbearance.

KROLL.

How good it is of you to think of her with so
kindness!

REBECCA.

[*Moves a little nearer.*] My dear Rector, you say
with such a ring of sincerity that I cannot think th
any ill-feeling lurking in the background.

KROLL.

Ill-feeling? Why, what do you mean?

REBECCA.

Well, it would be only natural if you felt it pain
see a stranger managing the household here at Ros
holm.

KROLL.

Why, how on earth——!

REBECCA.

But you have no such feeling? [*Takes his hand.*] Thanks, my dear Rector; thank you again and again.

KROLL.

How on earth did you get such an idea into your head?

REBECCA.

I began to be a little afraid when your visits became so rare.

KROLL.

Then you have been on a totally wrong scent, Miss West. Besides—after all, there has been no essential change. Even while poor Beata was alive—in her last unhappy days—it was you, and you alone, that managed everything.

REBECCA.

That was only a sort of regency in Beata's name.

KROLL.

Be that as it may——. Do you know, Miss West—for my part, I should have no objection whatever if you——. But I suppose I mustn't say such a thing.

REBECCA.

What must you not say?

KROLL.

If matters were to shape so that you took the empty place——

REBECCA.

I have the only place I want, Rector.

KROLL.

In fact, yes; but not in——

REBECCA.

[*Interrupting gravely.*] For shame, Rector Kroll. How can you joke about such things?

KROLL.

Oh well, our good Johannes Rosmer very likely thinks he has had more than enough of married life already. But nevertheless——

REBECCA.

You are really too absurd, Rector.

KROLL.

Nevertheless——. Tell me, Miss West—if you will forgive the question—what is your age?

REBECCA.

I'm sorry to say I am over nine-and-twenty, Rector; I am in my thirtieth year.

KROLL.

Indeed. And Rosmer—how old is he? Let me see: he is five years younger than I am, so that makes him well over forty-three. I think it would be most suitable.

REBECCA.

[*Rises.*] Of course, of course; most suitable.—Will you stay to supper this evening?

KROLL.

Yes, many thanks; I thought of staying. There is a matter I want to discuss with our good friend.—And I suppose, Miss West, in case you should take fancies into your head again, I had better come out pretty often for the future—as I used to in the old days.

REBECCA.

Oh yes, do—do. [*Shakes both his hands.*] Many thanks—how kind and good you are!

KROLL.

[*Gruffly.*] Am I? Well, that's not what they tell me at home.

JOHANNES ROSMER *enters by the door on the right.*

REBECCA.

Mr. Rosmer, do you see who is here?

JOHANNES ROSMER.

Madam Helseth told me. [RECTOR KROLL *has risen.*

ROSMER.

[*Gently and softly, pressing his hands.*] Welcome back to this house, my dear Kroll. [*Lays his hands on* KROLL'S *shoulders and looks into his eyes.*] My dear old friend!

I knew that sooner or later things would come all right between us.

KROLL.

Why, my dear fellow—do you mean to say you too have been so foolish as to fancy there was anything wrong?

REBECCA.

[*To* ROSMER.] Yes, only think,—it was nothing but fancy after all!

ROSMER.

Is that really the case, Kroll? Then why did you desert us so entirely?

KROLL.

[*Gravely, in a low voice.*] Because my presence would always have been reminding you of the years of your unhappiness, and of—the life that ended in the mill-race.

ROSMER.

Well, it was a kind thought—you were always considerate. But it was quite unnecessary to remain away on that account.—Come, sit here on the sofa. [*They sit down.*] No, I assure you, the thought of Beata has no pain for me. We speak of her every day. We feel almost as if she were still one of the household.

KROLL.

Do you really?

REBECCA.

[*Lighting the lamp.*] Yes, indeed we do

ROSMER.

It is quite natural. We were both so deeply attached to her. And both Rebec—both Miss West and I know that we did all that was possible for her in her affliction. We have nothing to reproach ourselves with.—So I feel nothing but a tranquil tenderness now at the thought of Beata.

KROLL.

You dear, good people! Henceforward, I declare I shall come out and see you every day.

REBECCA.

[*Seats herself in an arm-chair.*] Mind, we shall expect you to keep your word.

ROSMER.

[*With some hesitation.*] My dear Kroll—I wish very much that our intercourse had never been interrupted. Ever since we have known each other, you have seemed predestined to be my adviser—ever since I went to the University.

KROLL.

Yes, and I have always been proud of the office. But is there anything particular just now——?

ROSMER.

There are many things that I would give a great deal to talk over with you, quite frankly—straight from the heart.

REBECCA.

Ah yes, Mr. Rosmer—that must be such a comfort—between old friends——

KROLL.

Oh I can tell you I have still more to talk to you about. I suppose you know I have turned a militant politician?

ROSMER.

Yes, so you have. How did that come about?

KROLL.

I was forced into it in spite of myself. It is impossible to stand idly looking on any longer. Now that the Radicals have unhappily come into power, it is high time something should be done,—so I have got our little group of friends in the town to close up their ranks. I tell you it is high time!

REBECCA.

[*With a faint smile.*] Don't you think it may even be a little late?

KROLL.

Unquestionably it would have been better if we had checked the stream at an earlier point in its course. But who could foresee what was going to happen? Certainly not I. [*Rises and walks up and down.*] But now I have had my eyes opened once for all; for now the spirit of revolt has crept into the school itself.

ROSMER.

Into the school? Surely not into y o u r school?

KROLL.

I tell you it has—into my own school. What do you think? It has come to my knowledge that the sixth-

form boys—a number of them at any rate—have been keeping up a secret society for over six months; and they take in Mortensgård's paper!

REBECCA.

The "Beacon"?

KROLL.

Yes; nice mental sustenance for future government officials, is it not? But the worst of it is that it's all the cleverest boys in the form that have banded together in this conspiracy against me. Only the dunces at the bottom of the class have kept out of it.

REBECCA.

Do you take this so very much to heart, Rector?

KROLL.

Do I take it to heart! To be so thwarted and opposed in the work of my whole life! [*Lower.*] But I could almost say I don't care about the school—for there is worse behind. [*Looks round.*] I suppose no one can hear us?

REBECCA.

Oh no, of course not.

KROLL.

Well then, I must tell you that dissension and revolt have crept into my own house—into my own quiet home. They have destroyed the peace of my family life.

ROSMER.

[*Rises.*] What! Into your own house——?

REBECCA.

[*Goes over to the* RECTOR.] My dear Rector, what has happened?

KROLL.

Would you believe that my own children—— In short, it is Laurits that is the ringleader of the school conspiracy; and Hilda has embroidered a red portfolio to keep the "Beacon" in.

ROSMER.

I should certainly never have dreamt that, in your own house——

KROLL.

No, who would have dreamt of such a thing? In my house, the very home of obedience and order—where one will, and one only, has always prevailed——

REBECCA.

How does your wife take all this?

KROLL.

Why, that is the most incredible part of it. My wife, who all her life long has shared my opinions and concurred in my views, both in great things and small—she is actually inclined to side with the children on many points. And she blames me for what has happened. She says I tyrannise over the children. As if it weren't necessary to——. Well, you see how my house is divided against itself. But of course I say as little about it as

possible. Such things are best kept quiet. [*Wanders up the room.*] Ah, well, well, well.

[*Stands at the window with his hands behind his back, and looks out.*

REBECCA.

[*Comes up close to* ROSMER, *and says rapidly and in a low voice, so that the* RECTOR *does not hear her.*] Do it now!

ROSMER.

[*Also in a low voice.*] Not this evening.

REBECCA.

[*As before.*] Yes, just this evening.

[*Goes to the table and busies herself with the lamp.*

KROLL.

[*Comes forward.*] Well, my dear Rosmer, now you know how the spirit of the age has overshadowed both my domestic and my official life. And am I to refrain from combating this pernicious, subversive, anarchic spirit, with any weapon I can lay my hands on? Fight it I will, trust me for that; both with tongue and pen.

ROSMER.

Have you any hope of stemming the tide in that way?

KROLL.

At any rate I shall have done my duty as a citizen in defence of the State. And I hold it the duty of every

right-minded man with an atom of patriotism to do likewise. In fact—that was my principal reason for coming out here this evening.

ROSMER.

Why, my dear Kroll, what do you mean——? What can I——?

KROLL.

You can stand by your old friends. Do as we do. Lend a hand, with all your might.

REBECCA.

But, Rector Kroll, you know Mr. Rosmer's distaste for public life.

KROLL.

He must get over his distaste.—You don't keep abreast of things, Rosmer. You bury yourself alive here, with your historical collections. Far be it from me to speak disrespectfully of family trees and so forth; but, unfortunately, this is no time for hobbies of that sort. You cannot imagine the state things are in, all over the country. There is hardly a single accepted idea that hasn't been turned topsy-turvy. It will be a gigantic task to get all the errors rooted out again.

ROSMER.

I have no doubt of it. But I am the last man to undertake such a task.

REBECCA.

And besides, I think Mr. Rosmer has come to take a wider view of life than he used to.

KROLL.

[*With surprise.*] Wider?

REBECCA.

Yes; or freer, if you like—less one-sided.

KROLL.

What is the meaning of this? Rosmer—surely you are not so weak as to be influenced by the accident that the leaders of the mob have won a temporary advantage?

ROSMER.

My dear Kroll, you know how little I understand of politics. But I confess it seems to me that within the last few years people are beginning to show greater independence of thought.

KROLL.

Indeed! And you take it for granted that that must be an improvement! But in any case you are quite mistaken, my friend. Just inquire a little into the opinions that are current among the Radicals, both out here and in the town. They are neither more nor less than the wisdom that's retailed in the "Beacon."

REBECCA.

Yes; Mortensgård has great influence over many people hereabouts.

KROLL.

Yes, just think of it! A man of his foul antecedents—a creature that was turned out of his place as a school-

master on account of his immoral life! A fellow like that sets himself up as a leader of the people! And succeeds too! Actually succeeds! I hear he is going to enlarge his paper. I know on good authority that he is on the lookout for a capable assistant.

REBECCA.

I wonder that you and your friends don't set up an opposition to him.

KROLL.

That is the very thing we are going to do. We have to-day bought the *County News;* there was no difficulty about the money question. But—— [*Turns to* ROSMER.] Now I come to my real errand. The difficulty lies in the conduct of the paper—the editing——. Tell me, Rosmer,—don't you feel it your duty to undertake it, for the sake of the good cause?

ROSMER.

[*Almost in consternation.*] I!

REBECCA.

Oh, how can you think of such a thing?

KROLL.

I can quite understand your horror of public meetings, and your reluctance to expose yourself to their tender mercies. But an editor's work is less conspicuous, or rather——

ROSMER.

No no, my dear friend, you must not ask me to do this.

KROLL.

I should be quite willing to try my own hand at that style of work too; but I couldn't possibly manage it. I have such a multitude of irons in the fire already. But for you, with no profession to tie you down——. Of course the rest of us would give you as much help as we could.

ROSMER.

I cannot, Kroll. I am not fitted for it.

KROLL.

Not fitted? You said the same thing when your father preferred you to the living here——

ROSMER.

And I was right That was why I resigned it.

KROLL.

Oh, if only you are as good an editor as you were a clergyman, we shall not complain.

ROSMER.

My dear Kroll—I tell you once for all—I cannot do it.

KROLL.

Well, at any rate, you will lend us your name.

ROSMER.

My name?

KROLL.

Yes, the mere name, Johannes Rosmer, will be a great thing for the paper. We others are looked upon as confirmed partisans—indeed I hear I am denounced as a desperate fanatic—so that if we work the paper in our own names, we can't reckon upon its making much way among the misguided masses. You, on the contrary, have always kept out of the fight. Everybody knows and values your humanity and uprightness—your delicacy of mind—your unimpeachable honour. And then the prestige of your former position as a clergyman still clings to you; and, to crown all, you have your grand old family name!

ROSMER.

Oh, my name——

KROLL.

[*Points to the portraits.*] Rosmers of Rosmersholm—clergymen and soldiers; government officials of high place and trust; gentlemen to the finger-tips, every man of them—a family that for nearly two centuries has held its place as the first in the district. [*Lays his hand on* ROSMER'S *shoulder.*] Rosmer—you owe it to yourself and to the traditions of your race to take your share in guarding all that has hitherto been held sacred in our society. [*Turns round.*] What do y o u say, Miss West?

REBECCA.

[*Laughing softly, as if to herself.*] My dear Rector—I can't tell you how ludicrous all this seems to me.

KROLL.

What do you say? Ludicrous?

REBECCA.

Yes, ludicrous. For you must let me tell you frankly——

ROSMER.

[*Quickly.*] No no—be quiet! Not just now!

KROLL.

[*Looks from one to the other.*] My dear friends, what on earth——? [*Interrupting himself.*] H'm!

MADAM HELSETH *appears in the doorway on the right.*

MADAM HELSETH.

There's a man out in the kitchen passage that says he wants to see the Pastor.

ROSMER.

[*Relieved.*] Ah, very well. Ask him to come in.

MADAM HELSETH.

Into the sitting-room?

ROSMER.

Yes, of course.

MADAM HELSETH.

But he looks scarcely the sort of man to bring into the sitting-room.

REBECCA.

Why, what does he look like, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH.

Well, he's not much to look at Miss, and that's a fact.

ROSMER.

Did he not give his name?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes—I think he said his name was Hekman or something of the sort.

ROSMER.

I know nobody of that name.

MADAM HELSETH.

And then he said he was called Uldric too.

ROSMER.

[*In surprise.*] Ulric Hetman! Was that it?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, so it was—Hetman.

KROLL.

I've surely heard that name before——

REBECCA.

Wasn't that the name he used to write under—that strange being——

ROSMER.

[*To* KROLL.] It is Ulric Brendel's pseudonym.

KROLL.

That black sheep Ulric Brendel's—of course it is.

REBECCA.

Then he is still alive.

ROSMER.

I heard he had joined a company of strolling players.

KROLL.

When last *I* heard of him, he was in the House of Correction.

ROSMER.

Ask him to come in, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH.

Oh, very well. [*She goes out.*

KROLL.

Are you really going to let a man like that into your house?

ROSMER.

You know he was once my tutor.

KROLL.

Yes, I know he went and crammed your head full of revolutionary ideas, until your father showed him the door—with his horsewhip.

ROSMER.

[*With a touch of bitterness.*] Father was a martinet at home as well as in his regiment.

KROLL.

Thank him in his grave for that, my dear Rosmer.—Well?

MADAM HELSETH *opens the door on the right for* ULRIC BRENDEL, *and then withdraws, shutting the door behind him. He is a handsome man, with grey hair and beard; somewhat gaunt, but active and well set up. He is dressed like a common tramp; threadbare frock-coat; worn-out shoes; no shirt visible. He wears an old pair of black gloves, and carries a soft, greasy felt hat under his arm, and a walking-stick in his hand.*

ULRIC BRENDEL.

[*Hesitates at first, then goes quickly up to the* RECTOR, *and holds out his hand.*] Good evening, Johannes!

KROLL.

Excuse me——

BRENDEL.

Did you expect to see me again? And within these hated walls too?

KROLL.

Excuse me—— [*Pointing.*] T h e r e——

BRENDEL.

[*Turns.*] Right. There he is. Johannes—my boy—my best-beloved——!

ROSMER.

[*Takes his hand.*] My old teacher.

BRENDEL.

Notwithstanding certain painful memories, I could not pass by Rosmersholm without paying you a flying visit.

ROSMER.

You are heartily welcome here now. Be sure of that.

BRENDEL.

Ah, this charming lady——? [*Bows.*] Mrs. Rosmer, of course.

ROSMER.

Miss West.

BRENDEL.

A near relation, no doubt. And yonder unknown——? A brother of the cloth, I see.

ROSMER.

Rector Kroll.

BRENDEL.

Kroll? Kroll? Wait a bit?—Weren't you a student of philology in your young days?

KROLL.

Of course I was.

BRENDEL.

Why *Donnerwetter*, then I knew you!

KROLL.

Pardon me——

BRENDEL.

Weren't you——

KROLL.

Pardon me——

BRENDEL.

——one of those myrmidons of morality that got me turned out of the Debating Club?

KROLL.

Very likely. But I disclaim any closer acquaintanceship.

BRENDEL.

Well, well! *Nach Belieben, Herr Doctor.* It's all one to me. Ulric Brendel remains the man he is for all that.

REBECCA.

You are on your way into town, Mr. Brendel?

BRENDEL.

You have hit it, gracious lady. At certain intervals, I am constrained to strike a blow for existence. It goes against the grain; but—*enfin*—imperious necessity——

ROSMER.

Oh but, my dear Mr. Brendel, you must allow me to help you. In one way or another, I am sure——

BRENDEL.

Ha, such a proposal to me! Would you desecrate the bond that unites us? Never, Johannes, never!

ROSMER.

But what do you think of doing in town? Believe me, you won't find it easy to——

BRENDEL.

Leave that to me, my boy. The die is cast. Simple as I stand here before you, I am engaged in a comprehensive campaign—more comprehensive than all my previous excursions put together. [*To* RECTOR KROLL.] Dare I ask the Herr Professor—*unter uns*—have you a tolerably decent, reputable, and commodious Public Hall in your estimable city?

KROLL.

The hall of the Workmen's Society is the largest.

BRENDEL.

And has the Herr Professor any official influence in this doubtless most beneficent Society?

KROLL.

I have nothing to do with it.

REBECCA.

[*To* BRENDEL.] You should apply to Peter Mortensgård.

BRENDEL.

Pardon, madame—what sort of an idiot is he?

ROSMER.

What makes you take him for an idiot?

BRENDEL.

Can't I tell at once by the name that it belongs to a plebeian?

KROLL.

I did not expect that answer.

BRENDEL.

But I will conquer my reluctance. There is no alternative. When a man stands—as I do—at a turning-point in his career——. It is settled. I will approach this individual—will open personal negotiations——

ROSMER.

Are you really and seriously standing at a turning-point?

BRENDEL.

Surely my own boy knows that, stand he where he may, Ulric Brendel always stands really and seriously.—Yes, Johannes, I am going to put on a new man—to throw off the modest reserve I have hitherto maintained.

ROSMER.

How——?

BRENDEL.

I am about to take hold of life with a strong hand; to step forth; to assert myself. We live in a tempestuous, an equinoctial age.—I am about to lay my mite on the altar of Emancipation.

KROLL.

You too?

BRENDEL.

[*To them all.*] Is the local public at all familiar with my occasional writings?

KROLL.

No, I must candidly confess that——

REBECCA.

I have read several of them. My adopted father had them in his library.

BRENDEL.

Fair lady, then you have wasted your time. For, let me tell you, they are so much rubbish.

REBECCA.

Indeed!

BRENDEL.

What you have read, yes. My really important works no man or woman knows. No one—except myself.

REBECCA.

How does t h a t happen?

BRENDEL.

Because they are not written.

ROSMER.

But, my dear Mr. Brendel——

BRENDEL.

You know, my Johannes, that I am a bit of a Sybarite —a *Feinschmecker*. I have been so all my days. I like

to take my pleasures in solitude; for then I enjoy them doubly—tenfold. So, you see, when golden dreams descended and enwrapped me—when new, dizzy, far-reaching thoughts were born in me, and wafted me aloft on their sustaining pinions—I bodied them forth in poems, visions, pictures—in the rough, as it were, you understand.

ROSMER.

Yes, yes.

BRENDEL.

Oh, what pleasures, what intoxications I have enjoyed in my time! The mysterious bliss of creation—in the rough, as I said—applause, gratitude, renown, the wreath of bays—all these I have garnered with full hands quivering with joy. I have sated myself, in my secret thoughts, with a rapture—oh! so intense, so inebriating——!

KROLL.

H'm.

ROSMER.

But you have written nothing down?

BRENDEL.

Not a word. The soulless toil of the scrivener has always aroused a sickening aversion in me. And besides, why should I profane my own ideals, when I could enjoy them in their purity by myself? But now they shall be offered up. I assure you I feel like a mother who delivers her tender daughters into their bridegrooms' arms. But I will offer them up, none the less. I will sacrifice them on the altar of Emancipation. A series

of carefully elaborated lectures—over the whole country——!

REBECCA.

[*With animation.*] This is noble of you, Mr. Brendel! You are yielding up the dearest thing you possess.

ROSMER.

The only thing.

REBECCA.

[*Looking significantly at* ROSMER.] How many are there who do as much—who d a r e do as much?

ROSMER.

[*Returning the look.*] Who knows?

BRENDEL.

My audience is touched. That does my heart good—and steels my will. So now I will proceed to action. Stay—one thing more. [*To the* RECTOR.] Can you tell me, Herr Preceptor,—is there such a thing as a Temperance Society in the town? A Total Abstinence Society? I need scarcely ask.

KROLL.

Yes, there is. I am the president, at your service.

BRENDEL.

I saw it in your face! Well, it is by no means impossible that I may come to you and enrol myself as a member for a week.

KROLL.

Excuse me—we don't receive members by the week.

BRENDEL.

A la bonne heure, Herr Pedagogue. Ulric Brendel has never forced himself into that sort of Society. [*Turns.*] But I must not prolong my stay in this house, so rich in memories. I must get on to the town and select a suitable lodging. I presume there is a decent hotel in the place.

REBECCA.

Mayn't I offer you anything before you go?

BRENDEL.

Of what sort, gracious lady?

REBECCA.

A cup of tea, or——

BRENDEL.

I thank my bountiful hostess—but I am always loath to trespass on private hospitality. [*Waves his hand.*] Farewell, gentlefolks all! [*Goes towards the door, but turns again.*] Oh, by the way—Johannes—Pastor Rosmer—for the sake of our ancient friendship, will you do your former teacher a service?

ROSMER.

Yes, with all my heart.

BRENDEL.

Good. Then lend me—for a day or two—a starched shirt—with cuffs.

ROSMER.

Nothing else?

BRENDEL.

For you see I am travelling on foot—at present. My trunk is being sent after me.

ROSMER.

Quite so. But is there nothing else?

BRENDEL.

Well, do you know—perhaps you could spare me an oldish, well-worn summer overcoat.

ROSMER.

Yes, yes; certainly I can.

BRENDEL.

And if a respectable pair of boots happened to go along with the coat——

ROSMER.

That we can manage too. As soon as you let us know your address, we will send the things in.

BRENDEL.

Not on any account. Pray do not let me give you any trouble! I will take the bagatelles with me.

ROSMER.

As you please. Come upstairs with me then.

REBECCA.

Let me go. Madam Helseth and I will see to it.

BRENDEL.

I cannot think of suffering this distinguished lady to——

REBECCA.

Oh, nonsense! Come along, Mr. Brendel.

[*She goes out to the right.*

ROSMER.

[*Detaining him.*] Tell me—is there nothing else I can do for you?

BRENDEL.

Upon my word, I know of nothing more. Well, yes, damn it all—now that I think of it——! Johannes, do you happen to have eight crowns in your pocket?

ROSMER.

Let me see. [*Opens his purse.*] Here are two ten-crown notes

BRENDEL.

Well well, never mind! I can take them. I can always get them changed in the town. Thanks in the meantime. Remember it was two tenners you lent me. Good-night my own dear boy. Good-night, respected Sir.

[*Goes out to the right.* ROSMER *takes leave of him, and shuts the door behind him.*

KROLL.

Merciful Heaven—so t h a t is the Ulric Brendel people once expected such great things of.

ROSMER.

[*Quietly.*] At least he has had the courage to live his life his own way. I don't think t h a t is such a small matter either.

KROLL.

What? A life like his! I almost believe he has it in him to turn your head afresh.

ROSMER.

Oh no. My mind is quite clear now, upon all points.

KROLL.

I wish I could believe it, my dear Rosmer. You are so terribly impressionable.

ROSMER.

Let us sit down. I want to talk to you.

KROLL.

Yes; let us. [*They seat themselves on the sofa.*

ROSMER.

[*After a slight pause.*] Don't you think we lead a pleasant and comfortable life here?

KROLL.

Yes, your life is pleasant and comfortable now—and peaceful. You have found yourself a home, Rosmer. And I have lost mine.

ROSMER.

My dear friend, don't say that. The wound will heal again in time.

KROLL.

Never; never. The barb will always rankle. Things can never be as they were.

ROSMER.

Listen to me, Kroll. We have been fast friends for many and many a year. Does it seem to you conceivable that our friendship should ever go to wreck?

KROLL.

I know of nothing in the world that could estrange us. What puts that into your head?

ROSMER.

You attach such paramount importance to uniformity of opinions and views.

KROLL.

No doubt; but we two are in practical agreement—at any rate on the great essential questions.

ROSMER.

[*In a low voice.*] No; not now.

KROLL.

[*Tries to spring up.*] What is this?

ROSMER.

[*Holding him.*] No you must sit still—I entreat you, Kroll.

KROLL.

What can this mean? I don't understand you. Speak plainly.

ROSMER.

A new summer has blossomed in my soul. I see with eyes grown young again. And so now I stand——

KROLL.

Where—where, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

Where your children stand.

KROLL.

You? You! Impossible! Where do you say you stand?

ROSMER.

On the same side as Laurits and Hilda.

KROLL.

[*Bows his head.*] An apostate! Johannes Rosmer an apostate!

ROSMER.

I should have felt so happy—so intensely happy, in what you call my apostasy. But nevertheless I suffered deeply; for I knew it would be a bitter sorrow to you.

KROLL.

Rosmer—Rosmer! I shall never get over this! [*Looks gloomily at him.*] To think that you too can find it in your heart to help on the work of corruption and ruin in this unhappy land.

ROSMER.

It is the work of emancipation I wish to help on.

KROLL.

Oh yes, I know. That is what both the tempters and their victims call it. But do you think there is any emancipation to be expected from the spirit that is now poisoning our whole social life?

ROSMER.

I am not in love with the spirit that is in the ascendant, nor with either of the contending parties. I will try to bring together men from both sides—as many as I can—and to unite them as closely as possible. I will devote my life and all my energies to this one thing—the creation of a true democracy in this country.

KROLL.

So you don't think we have democracy enough already! For my part it seems to me we are all in a fair way to be

dragged down into the mire, where hitherto only the mob have been able to thrive.

ROSMER.

That is just why I want to awaken the democracy to its true task.

KROLL.

What task?

ROSMER.

That of making all the people of this country noble——

KROLL.

All the people——?

ROSMER.

As many as possible, at any rate.

KROLL.

By what means?

ROSMER.

By freeing their minds and purifying their wills.

KROLL.

You are a dreamer, Rosmer. Will y o u free them? Will y o u purify them?

ROSMER.

No, my dear friend—I will only try to arouse them to their task. They themselves must accomplish it.

KROLL.

And you think they can?

ROSMER.

Yes.

KROLL.

By their own strength?

ROSMER.

Yes, precisely by their own strength. There is no other.

KROLL.

[*Rises.*] Is this becoming language for a priest?

ROSMER.

I am no longer a priest.

KROLL.

Well but—the faith of your fathers——?

ROSMER.

It is mine no more.

KROLL.

No more——!

ROSMER.

[*Rises.*] I have given it up. I had to give it up, Kroll.

KROLL.

[*Controlling his agitation.*] Oh, indeed—— Yes, yes, yes. I suppose one thing goes with another. Was this, then, your reason for leaving the Church?

ROSMER.

Yes. As soon as my mind was clear—as soon as I was quite certain that this was no passing attack of scepticism, but a conviction I neither could nor would shake off—then I at once left the Church.

KROLL.

So this has been your state of mind all this time! And we—your friends—have heard nothing of it. Rosmer—Rosmer—how could you hide the miserable truth from us!

ROSMER.

Because it seemed to me a matter that concerned myself alone. And besides, I did not wish to give you and my other friends any needless pain. I thought I might live on here, as before, quietly, serenely, happily. I wanted to read, to bury myself in all the studies that until then had been sealed books to me. I wanted to make myself thoroughly at home in the great world of truth and freedom that has been revealed to me.

KROLL.

Apostate! Every word proves it. But why, then, do you confess your secret apostasy after all? And why just at this time?

ROSMER.

You yourself have driven me to it, Kroll.

KROLL.

I? Have I driven you——?

ROSMER.

When I heard of your violence on the platform—when I read all the rancorous speeches you made—your bitter onslaughts on your opponents—the contemptuous invectives you heaped on them—oh Kroll, to think that you—y o u—could come to this!—then my duty stood imperatively before me. Men are growing evil in this struggle. Peace and joy and mutual forbearance must once more enter into our souls. That is why I now intend to step forward and openly avow myself for what I am. I, too, will try my strength. Could not you—from your side—help me in this, Kroll?

KROLL.

Never so long as I live will I make peace with the subversive forces in society.

ROSMER.

Then at least let us fight with honourable weapons—since fight we must.

KROLL.

Whoever is not with me in the essential things of life, him I no longer know. I owe him no consideration.

ROSMER.

Does that apply to me too?

KROLL.

It is you that have broken with me, Rosmer.

ROSMER.

Is this a breach then?

KROLL.

This! It is a breach with all who have hitherto been your friends. You must take the consequences.

REBECCA WEST *enters from the right, and opens the door wide.*

REBECCA.

There now; he is on his way to his great sacrifice. And now we can go to supper. Will you come in, Rector?

KROLL.

[*Takes up his hat.*] Good-night, Miss West. I have nothing more to do here.

REBECCA.

[*Eagerly.*] What is this? [*Shuts the door and comes forward.*] Have you spoken?

ROSMER.

He knows everything.

KROLL.

We will not let you go, Rosmer. We will force you to come back to us.

ROSMER.

I can never stand where I did.

KROLL.

We shall see. You are not the man to endure standing alone.

ROSMER.

I shall not be so completely alone after all.—There are two of us to bear the loneliness together.

KROLL.

Ah——! [*A suspicion appears in his face.*] That too! Beata's words——!

ROSMER.

Beata's——?

KROLL.

[*Shaking off the thought.*] No, no—that was vile. Forgive me.

ROSMER.

What? What do you mean?

KROLL.

Don't ask. Bah! Forgive me! Good-bye!
[*Goes towards the entrance door.*

ROSMER.

[*Follows him.*] Kroll! Our friendship must not end like this. I will come and see you to-morrow.

KROLL.

[*In the hall, turns.*] You shall never cross my threshold again. [*He takes up his stick and goes out.*

[ROSMER *stands for a moment in the doorway; then shuts the door and walks up to the table.*

ROSMER.

It does not matter, Rebecca. We will see it out, we two faithful friends—you[1] and I.

REBECCA.

What do you think he meant when he said "That was vile"?

ROSMER.

Don't trouble about that, dear. He himself didn't believe what was in his mind. To-morrow I will go and see him. Good-night!

REBECCA.

Are you going upstairs so early to-night? After this?

ROSMER.

To-night as usual. I feel so relieved, now it is over. You see—I am quite calm, Rebecca. Do you, too, take it calmly. Good-night!

REBECCA.

Good-night, dear friend! Sleep well!

[ROSMER *goes out by the hall door, his steps are heard ascending the staircase.*

[REBECCA *goes and pulls a bell-rope near the stove. Shortly after,* MADAM HELSETH *enters from the right.*

REBECCA.

You can take away the supper things, Madam Helseth. Mr. Rosmer doesn't want anything, and the Rector has gone home.

[1] From this point, and throughout when alone, Rosmer and Rebecca use the *du* of intimate friendship in speaking to each other.

MADAM HELSETH.

Has the Rector gone? What was the matter with him?

REBECCA.

[*Takes up her crochet work.*] He said he thought there was a heavy storm brewing——

MADAM HELSETH.

What a strange notion! There's not a cloud in the sky this evening.

REBECCA.

Let us hope he mayn't meet the White Horse! I'm afraid we shall soon be hearing something from the bogies now.

MADAM HELSETH.

Lord forgive you, Miss! Don't say such awful things.

REBECCA.

Well, well, well——

MADAM HELSETH.

[*Softly.*] Do you really think some one is to go soon, Miss?

REBECCA.

No; why should I think so? But there are so many sorts of white horses in this world, Madam Helseth.—Well, good-night. I shall go to my room now.

MADAM HELSETH.

Good-night, Miss.

[REBECCA *goes out to the right, with her crochet work.*

MADAM HELSETH.

[*Turns the lamp down, shaking her head and muttering to herself.*] Lord—Lord! That Miss West! The things she does say!

ACT SECOND

JOHANNES ROSMER'S *study. Entrance door on the left. At the back, a doorway with a curtain drawn aside, leading into* ROSMER'S *bedroom. On the right a window, and in front of it a writing-table covered with books and papers. Bookshelves and cases round the room. The furniture is simple. On the left, an old-fashioned sofa, with a table in front of it.*

JOHANNES ROSMER, *in an indoor jacket, is sitting in a high-backed chair at the writing-table. He is cutting and turning over the leaves of a pamphlet, and reading a little here and there.*

There is a knock at the door on the left.

ROSMER.

[*Without moving.*] Come in.

REBECCA WEST.

[*Enters, dressed in a morning gown.*] Good morning.

ROSMER.

[*Turning the leaves of the pamphlet.*] Good morning, dear. Do you want anything?

REBECCA.

I only wanted to hear if you had slept well.

ROSMER.

Oh I have had a beautiful, peaceful night. [*Turns.*] And you?

REBECCA.

Oh yes, thanks—towards morning——

ROSMER.

I don't know when I have felt so light-hearted as I do now. I am so glad I managed to speak out at last.

REBECCA.

Yes, it is a pity you remained silent so long, Rosmer.

ROSMER.

I don't understand myself how I could be such a coward

REBECCA.

It wasn't preciseiy cowardice——

ROSMER.

Oh yes, dear—when I think the thing out, I can see there was a touch of cowardice at the bottom of it.

REBECCA.

All the braver, then, to make the plunge at last. [*Sits on a chair at the writing-table, close to him.*] But now I want to tell you of something I have done—and you mustn't be vexed with me about it.

ROSMER.

Vexed? How can you think——?

REBECCA.

Well, it was perhaps rather indiscreet of me, but——

ROSMER.

Let me hear what it was.

REBECCA.

Yesterday evening, when Ulric Brendel was leaving—I gave him a note to Peter Mortensgård.

ROSMER.

[*A little doubtful.*] Why, my dear Rebecca—— Well, what did you say?

REBECCA.

I said that he would be doing you a service if he would look after that unfortunate creature a little, and help him in any way he could.

ROSMER.

Dear, you shouldn't have done that. You have only done Brendel harm. And Mortensgård is not a man I care to have anything to do with. You know of that old episode between us.

REBECCA.

But don't you think it would be as well to make it up with him again?

ROSMER.

I? With Mortensgård? In what way do you mean?

REBECCA.

Well, you know you can't feel absolutely secure now—after this breach with your old friends.

ROSMER.

[*Looks at her and shakes his head.*] Can you really believe that Kroll or any of the others would try to take revenge on me? That they would be capable of——?

REBECCA.

In the first heat of anger, dear——. No one can be sure. I think—after the way the Rector took it——

ROSMER.

Oh, you ought surely to know him better than that. Kroll is a gentleman, to the backbone. I am going into town this afternoon to talk to him. I will talk to them all. Oh you shall see how easily it will all go——

MADAM HELSETH *appears at the door on the left.*

REBECCA.

[*Rises.*] What is it, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH.

Rector Kroll is downstairs in the hall.

ROSMER.

[*Rises hastily.*] Kroll!

REBECCA.

The Rector! Is it possible——

MADAM HELSETH.

He wants to know if he may come upstairs, Mr. Rosmer.

ROSMER.

[*To* REBECCA.] What did I tell you?—Of course he may. [*Goes to the door and calls down the stairs.*] Come up, dear friend! I am delighted to see you.

[ROSMER *stands holding the door open.* MADAM HELSETH *goes out.* REBECCA *draws the curtain before the doorway at the back, and then begins arranging things in the room.*

RECTOR KROLL *enters, with his hat in his hand.*

ROSMER.

[*With quiet emotion.*] I knew it couldn't be the last time——

KROLL.

I see things to-day in quite a different light from yesterday.

ROSMER.

Ah yes, Kroll; I was sure you would, now that you have had time to reflect.

KROLL.

You misunderstand me completely. [*Lays his hat on the table beside the sofa.*] It is of the utmost importance that I should speak to you, alone.

ROSMER.

Why may not Miss West——?

REBECCA.

No no, Mr. Rosmer. I will go.

KROLL.

[*Looks at her from head to foot.*] And I must ask Miss West to excuse my coming at such an untimely hour—taking her unawares before she has had time to——

REBECCA.

[*Surprised.*] What do you mean? Do you see any harm in my wearing a morning gown about the house?

KROLL.

Heaven forbid! I know nothing of what may now be customary at Rosmersholm.

ROSMER.

Why, Kroll—you are not yourself to-day!

REBECCA.

Allow me to wish you good morning, Rector Kroll.

[*She goes out to the left.*

KROLL.

By your leave—— [*Sits on the sofa.*

ROSMER.

Yes, Kroll, sit down, and let us talk things out amicably.

[*He seats himself in a chair directly opposite to the* RECTOR.

KROLL.

I haven't closed an eye since yesterday. I have been lying thinking and thinking all night.

ROSMER.

And what do you say to things to-day?

KROLL.

It will be a long story, Rosmer. Let me begin with a sort of introduction. I can give you news of Ulric Brendel.

ROSMER.

Has he called on you?

KROLL.

No. He took up his quarters in a low public-house—in the lowest company of course—and drank and stood treat as long as he had any money. Then he began abusing the whole company as a set of disreputable blackguards—and so far he was quite right—whereupon they thrashed him and pitched him out into the gutter.

ROSMER.

So he is incorrigible after all.

KROLL.

He had pawned the coat too; but I am told that has been redeemed for him. Can you guess by whom?

ROSMER.

Perhaps by you?

KROLL.

No; by the distinguished Mr. Mortensgård.

ROSMER.

Ah, indeed.

KROLL.

I understand that Mr. Brendel's first visit was to the "idiot" and "plebeian."

ROSMER.

Well, it was lucky for him——

KROLL.

To be sure it was. [*Leans over the table towards* ROSMER.] And that brings me to a matter it is my duty to warn you about, for our old—for our former friendship's sake.

ROSMER.

My dear Kroll, what can t h a t be?

KROLL.

It is this: there are things going on behind your back in this house.

ROSMER.

How can you think so? Is it Reb—is it Miss West you are aiming at?

KROLL.

Precisely. I can quite understand it on her part. She has so long been accustomed to have everything her own way here. But nevertheless——

ROSMER.

My dear Kroll, you are utterly mistaken. She and I—we have no concealments from each other on any subject whatever.

KROLL.

Has she told you, then, that she has entered into correspondence with the editor of the "Beacon"?

ROSMER.

Oh, you are thinking of the few lines she sent by Ulric Brendel?

KROLL.

Then you h a v e found it out. And do you approve of her entering into relations with a scurrilous scribbler, who never lets a week pass without holding me up to ridicule, both as a schoolmaster and as a public man?

ROSMER.

My dear Kroll, I don't suppose that side of the matter ever entered her head. And besides, of course she has full liberty of action, just as I have.

KROLL.

Indeed? Ah, no doubt that follows from your new line of thought. For Miss West presumably shares your present standpoint?

ROSMER.

Yes, she does. We two have worked our way forward in faithful comradeship.

KROLL.

[*Looks at him and slowly shakes his head.*] Oh, you blind, deluded being!

ROSMER.

I? Why do you say that?

KROLL.

Because I dare not—I will not think the worst. No no, let me say my say out.—You really do value my friendship, Rosmer? And my respect too? Do you not?

ROSMER.

I surely need not answer that question.

KROLL.

Well, but there are other questions that do require an answer—a full explanation on your part.—Will you submit to a sort of investigation——?

ROSMER.

Investigation?

KROLL.

Yes; will you let me question you about certain things it may pain you to be reminded of? You see—this apostasy of yours—well, this emancipation, as you call it—is bound up with many other things that for your own sake you must explain to me.

ROSMER.

My dear Kroll, ask what questions you please. I have nothing to conceal.

ble invalid may do?

KROLL.

Are you certain that Beata was c
for her actions? The doctors, at
means convinced of it.

ROSMER.

If the doctors had ever seen her
her, for days and nights together
no doubts.

KROLL.

I had no doubts either—then.

ROSMER.

Oh no, unhappily, there wasn'
doubt. I have told you of her wi
which she expected me to return.
me! And then her causeless, cor
during the last few years.

KROLL.

ROSMER.

Yes, just think of that! Such terrible, haunting agony of mind about a thing utterly beyond her control——! How could you call her responsible for her actions?

KROLL.

H'm——. Can you remember whether you had any books in the house at that time treating of the rationale of marriage—according to the "advanced" ideas of the day.

ROSMER.

I remember Miss West lending me a work of the kind. The Doctor left her his library, you know. But, my dear Kroll, you surely cannot suppose we were so reckless as to let my poor sick wife get hold of any such ideas? I can solemnly assure you that the fault was not ours. It was her own distempered brain that drove her into these wild aberrations.

KROLL.

One thing at any rate I can tell you; and that is, that poor, overstrung, tortured Beata put an end to her life in order that you might live happily—live freely, and—after your own heart.

ROSMER.

[*Starts half up from his chair.*] What do you mean by that?

KROLL.

Listen to me quietly, Rosmer; for now I can speak of it. In the last year of her life she came to me twice to pour forth all her anguish and despair.

ROSMER.

[*Eagerly.*] What you say is impossi
lutely impossible! You must be mist

KROLL.

And why?

ROSMER.

Because while Beata was alive I
with myself in doubt. And that figh
and in utter silence. I don't think e

KROLL.

Rebecca?

ROSMER.

Oh well—Miss West. I call her
nience' sake.

KROLL.

So I have remarked.

ROSMER.

So it is inconceivable to me how I
hold of the idea. And why did she

KROLL.

Poor creature—she begged and implored me to talk to you.

ROSMER.

And why did you not?

KROLL.

At that time I never for a moment doubted that she was out of her mind. Such an accusation against a man like you!—And then she came again—about a month later. This time she seemed outwardly calmer; but as she was going she said: "They may soon expect the White Horse at Rosmersholm now."

ROSMER.

Yes, yes. The White Horse—she often spoke of it.

KROLL.

And when I tried to divert her mind from such melancholy fancies, she only answered: "I have not long to live; for Johannes must marry Rebecca at once."

ROSMER.

[*Almost speechless.*] What do you say? I marry——?

KROLL.

That was on a Thursday afternoon——. On the Saturday evening she threw herself from the bridge into the mill-race.

ROSMER.

And you never warned us——!

KROLL.

You know very well how often she used to say that she felt her end was near.

ROSMER.

Yes, I know. But nevertheless—you s h o u l d have warned us!

KROLL.

I did think of it; but not till too late.

ROSMER.

But afterwards, why did you not——? Why have you said nothing about all this?

KROLL.

What good would it have done for me to come torturing and harassing you still further? I took all she said for mere wild, empty ravings—until yesterday evening.

ROSMER.

Then you have now changed your opinion?

KROLL.

Did not Beata see quite clearly when she declared you were about to desert the faith of your fathers?

ROSMER.

[*Looks fixedly, straight before him.*] I cannot understand it. It is the most incomprehensible thing in the world.

KROLL.

Incomprehensible or not—there it is. And now I ask you, Rosmer,—how much truth is there in her other accusation? The last one, I mean.

ROSMER.

Accusation? Was t h a t an accusation?

KROLL.

Perhaps you did not notice the way she worded it. She had to go, she said—why?

ROSMER.

In order that I might marry Rebecca——

KROLL.

These were not precisely her words. Beata used a different expression. She said: "I have not long to live; for Johannes m u s t marry Rebecca at o n c e."

ROSMER.

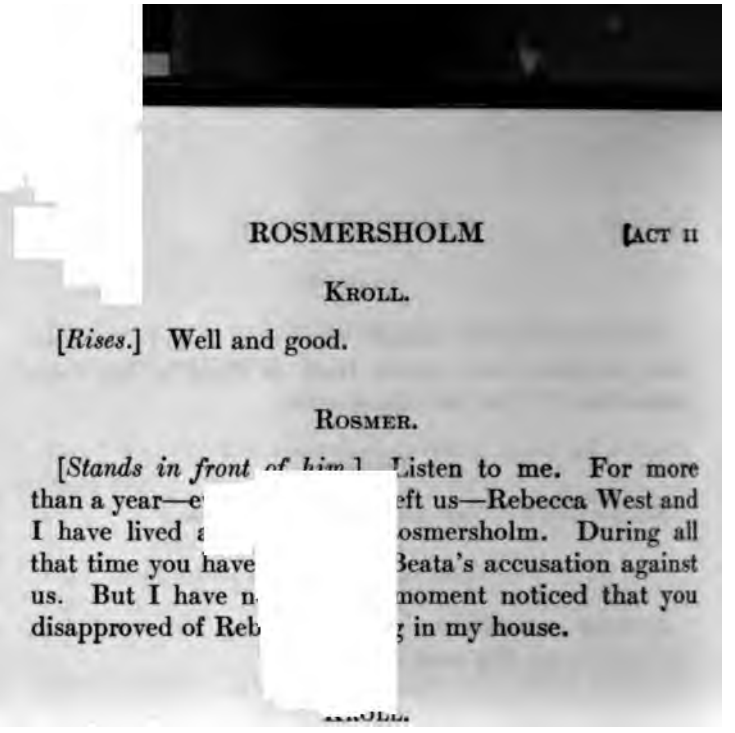
[*Looks at him for a moment; then rises.*] Now I understand you, Kroll.

KROLL.

And what then? What is your answer?

ROSMER.

[*Still quiet and self-restrained.*] To such an unheard-of——? The only fitting answer would be to point to the door.



I did not know till yesterday evening that it was an unbelieving man who was living with an—emancipated woman.

ROSMER.

Ah——! Then you do not believe that purity of mind is to be found among the unbelieving and the emancipated? You do not believe that morality may be an instinctive law of their nature!

KROLL.

I have no great faith in the morality that is not founded on the teachings of the Church.

ROSMER.

And you mean this to apply to Rebecca and me? To the relation between us two——?

KROLL.

Not even out of consideration for you two can I depart from my opinion that there is no unfathomable gulf between free thought and—h'm——

ROSMER.

And what?

KROLL.

——and free love,—since you will have it.

ROSMER.

[*In a low voice.*] And you are not ashamed to say this to me! You, who have known me from my earliest youth!

KROLL.

For that very reason. I know how easily you are influenced by the people you associate with. And this Rebecca of yours—well, Miss West then—we really know little or nothing about her. In short, Rosmer—I will not give you up. And you—you must try to save yourself in time.

ROSMER.

Save myself? How——?

MADAM HELSETH *peeps in at the door on the left.*

ROSMER.

What do you want?

MADAM HELSETH.

I wanted to ask Miss West to step downstairs.

ROSMER.

Miss West is not up here.

MADAM HELSETH.

Isn't she? [*Looks round the room.*] Well, that's strange. [*She goes.*

ROSMER.

You were saying——?

KROLL.

Listen to me. I am not going to inquire too closely into the secret history of what went on here in Beata's lifetime—and may still be going on. I know that your marriage was a most unhappy one; and I suppose that must be taken as some sort of excuse——

ROSMER.

Oh, how little you really know me——!

KROLL.

Don't interrupt me. What I mean is this: if your present mode of life with Miss West is to continue, it is absolutely necessary that the change of views—the unhappy backsliding—brought about by her evil influence, should be hushed up. Let me speak! Let me speak! I say, if the worst comes to the worst, in Heaven's name think and believe whatever you like about everything under the sun. But you must keep your views to yourself. These things are purely personal matters, after all. There is no need to proclaim them from the housetops.

ROSMER.

I feel it an absolute necessity to get out of a false and equivocal position.

KROLL.

But you have a duty towards the traditions of your race, Rosmer! Remember that! Rosmersholm has, so to speak, radiated morality and order from time immemorial—yes, and respectful conformity to all that is accepted and sanctioned by the best people. The whole district has taken its stamp from Rosmersholm. It would lead to deplorable, irremediable confusion if it were known that you had broken with what I may call the hereditary idea of the house of Rosmer.

ROSMER.

My dear Kroll, I cannot see the matter in that light. I look upon it as my imperative duty to spread a little light and gladness here, where the Rosmer family has from generation to generation been a centre of darkness and oppression.

KROLL.

[*Looks at him severely.*] Yes, that would be a worthy life-work for the last of your race! No, Rosmer; let such things alone; you are the last man for such a task. You were born to be a quiet student.

ROSMER.

Perhaps so. But for once in a way I mean to bear my part in the battle of life.

KROLL.

And do you know what that battle of life will mean for you? It will mean a life-and-death struggle with all your friends.

ROSMER.

[*Quietly.*] They cannot all be such fanatics as you.

KROLL.

You are a credulous creature, Rosmer. An inexperienced creature too. You have no conception of the overwhelming storm that will burst upon you.

MADAM HELSETH *looks in at the door on the left.*

MADAM HELSETH.

Miss West wants to know——

ROSMER.

What is it?

MADAM HELSETH.

There's a man downstairs wanting to have a word with the Pastor.

ROSMER.

Is it the man who was here yesterday evening?

MADAM HELSETH.

No, it's that Mortensgård.

ROSMER.

Mortensgård?

KROLL.

Aha! So it has come to this, has it?—Already!

ROSMER.

What does he want with me? Why didn't you send him away?

MADAM HELSETH.

Miss West said I was to ask if he might come upstairs.

ROSMER.

Tell him I'm engaged——

KROLL.

[*To* MADAM HELSETH.] Let him come up, Madam Helseth. [MADAM HELSETH *goes.* *He takes up his hat.*] I retire from the field—for the moment. But the main battle has yet to be fought.

ROSMER.

On my honour, Kroll—I have nothing whatever to do with Mortensgård.

KROLL.

I do not believe you. On no subject and in no relation whatever will I henceforth believe you. It is war to the knife now. We will try whether we cannot disarm you.

ROSMER.

Oh Kroll—how low—how very low you have sunk!

KROLL.

I? And y o u think you have the right to say that to me! Remember Beata!

ROSMER.

Still harping upon t h a t?

KROLL.

No. You must solve the enigma of the mill-race according to your own conscience—if you have anything of the sort left.

PETER MORTENSGÅRD *enters softly and quietly from the left. He is a small, wiry man with thin reddish hair and beard.*

KROLL.

[*With a look of hatred.*] Ah, here we have the "Beacon"—burning at Rosmersholm! [*Buttons his coat.*] Well, now I can no longer hesitate what course to steer.

MORTENSGÅRD.

[*Deferentially.*] The "Beacon" may always be relied upon to light the Rector home.

KROLL.

Yes; you have long shown your goodwill. To be sure there's a commandment about bearing false witness against your neighbour——

MORTENSGÅRD.

Rector Kroll need not instruct me in the commandments.

KROLL.

Not even in the seventh?

ROSMER.

Kroll——!

MORTENSGÅRD.

If I needed instruction, it would rather be the Pastor's business.

KROLL.

[*With covert sarcasm.*] The Pastor's? Oh yes, unquestionably Pastor Rosmer is the man for t h a t.—Good luck to your conference, gentlemen!

[*Goes out and slams the door behind him.*

ROSMER.

[*Keeps his eyes fixed on the closed door and says to himself.*] Well, well—so be it then. [*Turns.*] Will you be good enough to tell me, Mr. Mortensgård, what brings you out here to me?

MORTENSGÅRD.

It was really Miss West I came to see. I wanted to thank her for the friendly note I received from her yesterday.

ROSMER.

I know she wrote to you. Have you seen her then?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Yes, for a short time. [*Smiles slightly.*] I hear there has been a certain change of views out here at Rosmersholm.

ROSMER.

My views are altered in many respects. I might almost say in all.

MORTENSGÅRD.

So Miss West told me; and that's why she thought I had better come up and talk things over with the Pastor.

ROSMER.

What things, Mr. Mortensgård?

MORTENSGÅRD.

May I announce in the "Beacon" that there has been a change in your views—that you have joined the party of freedom and progress?

ROSMER.

Certainly you may. In fact, I beg you to make the announcement.

MORTENSGÅRD.

Then it shall appear in to-morrow's paper. It will cause a great sensation when it's known that Pastor Rosmer of Rosmersholm is prepared to take up arms for the cause of light, in t h a t sense too.

ROSMER.

I don't quite understand you.

MORTENSGÅRD.

I mean that the moral position of our party is greatly strengthened whenever we gain an adherent of serious, Christian principles.

ROSMER.

[*With some surprise.*] Then you do not know——? Did not Miss West tell you that too?

MORTENSGÅRD.

What, Pastor Rosmer? Miss West was in a great hurry. She said I was to go upstairs and hear the rest from yourself.

ROSMER.

Well, in that case I may tell you that I have emancipated myself entirely, and on every side. I have broken with all the dogmas of the Church. Henceforth they are nothing to me.

MORTENSGÅRD.

[*Looks at him in amazement.*] Well—if the skies were to fall I couldn't be more——! Pastor Rosmer himself announces——.

ROSMER.

Yes, I now stand where you have stood for many years. That, too, you may announce in the "Beacon" to-morrow.

MORTENSGÅRD.

That too? No, my dear Pastor—excuse me—I don't think it would be wise to touch on that side of the matter.

ROSMER.

Not touch on it?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Not at present, I mean.

ROSMER.

I don't understand——

MORTENSGÅRD.

Well you see, Pastor Rosmer—you probably don't know the ins and outs of things so well as I do. But, since you have come over to the party of freedom—and, as I hear from Miss West, you intend to take an active share in the movement—I presume you would like to be of as much service as possible, both to the cause in general and to this particular agitation.

ROSMER.

Yes, that is my earnest wish.

MORTENSGÅRD.

Good. But now I must tell you, Pastor Rosmer, that if you openly declare your defection from the Church, you tie your own hands at the very outset.

ROSMER.

Do you think so?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Yes; believe me, you won't be able to do much for the cause, in this part of the country at any rate. And besides—we have plenty of free-thinkers already, Pastor Rosmer—I might almost say too many. What the party requires, is a Christian element—something that every one must respect. T h a t is what we are sadly in need of. And therefore I advise you to keep your own counsel about what doesn't concern the public. That's my view of the matter, at least.

ROSMER.

I understand. Then if I openly confess my apostasy, you dare not have anything to do with me?

MORTENSGÅRD.

[*Shaking his head.*] I scarcely like to risk it, Pastor Rosmer. I have made it a rule for some time past not to support any one or anything that is actively opposed to the Church.

ROSMER.

Then you have yourself returned to the Church?

MORTENSGÅRD.

That concerns no one but myself.

ROSMER.

Ah, so that is it. Now I understand you.

MORTENSGÅRD.

Pastor Rosmer—you ought to remember that I—I in particular—have not full liberty of action.

ROSMER.

What hampers you?

MORTENSGÅRD.

The fact that I am a marked man.

ROSMER.

Ah—indeed.

MORTENSGÅRD.

A marked man, Pastor Rosmer. You, above all men, should remember that; for I have chiefly you to thank for the scandal that branded me.

ROSMER.

If I had then stood where I stand now, I should have dealt more gently with your offence.

MORTENSGÅRD.

That I don't doubt. But it is too late now. You have branded me once for all—branded me for life. I suppose you can scarcely understand what that means. But now you may perhaps come to feel the smart of it yourself, Pastor Rosmer.

ROSMER.

I?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Yes. You surely don't suppose that Rector Kroll and his set will ever forgive a desertion like yours? I hear the "County News" is going to be very savage in future. You too may find yourself a marked man before long.

ROSMER.

In personal matters, Mr. Mortensgård, I feel myself secure from attack. My life is beyond reproach.

MORTENSGÅRD.

[*With a sly smile.*] That's a large word, Mr. Rosmer.

ROSMER.

Perhaps; but I have a right to use it.

MORTENSGÅRD.

Even if you were to scrutinise your conduct as closely as you once scrutinised mine?

ROSMER.

Your tone is very curious. What are you hinting at? Anything definite?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Yes, something definite. Only one thing. But t h a t might be bad enough, if malicious opponents got wind of it.

ROSMER.

Will you have the kindness to let me hear what it is?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Cannot you guess for yourself, Pastor?

ROSMER.

No, certainly not. I have not the slightest idea.

MORTENSGÅRD.

Well well, I suppose I must come out with it then.—I have in my possession a strange letter, dated from Rosmersholm.

ROSMER.

Miss West's letter, do you mean? Is it so strange?

MORTENSGÅRD.

No, there's nothing strange about that. But I once received another letter from this house.

ROSMER.

Also from Miss West?

MORTENSGÅRD.

No, Mr. Rosmer.

ROSMER.

Well then, from whom? From whom?

MORTENSGÅRD.

From the late Mrs. Rosmer.

ROSMER.

From my wife! You received a letter from my wife!

MORTENSGÅRD.

I did.

ROSMER.

When?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Towards the close of Mrs. Rosmer's life. Perhaps about a year and a half ago. That is the letter I call strange.

ROSMER.

I suppose you know that my wife's mind was affected at that time.

MORTENSGÅRD.

Yes; I know many people thought so. But I don't think there was anything in the letter to show it. When I call it strange, I mean in another sense.

ROSMER.

And what in the world did my poor wife take it into her head to write to y o u about?

MORTENSGÅRD.

I have the letter at home. She begins to the effect that she is living in great anxiety and fear; there are so many malicious people about here, she says; and they think of nothing but causing you trouble and injury.

ROSMER.

Me?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Yes, so she says. And then comes the strangest part of all. Shall I go on, Pastor Rosmer?

ROSMER.

Assuredly! Tell me everything, without reserve.

MORTENSGÅRD.

The deceased lady begs and implores me to be magnanimous. She knows, she says, that it was her husband that had me dismissed from my post as teacher; and she conjures me by all that's sacred not to avenge myself.

ROSMER.

How did she suppose you could avenge yourself?

MORTENSGÅRD.

The letter says that if I should hear rumours of sinful doings at Rosmersholm, I am not to believe them; they are only spread abroad by wicked people who wish to make you unhappy.

ROSMER.

Is all that in the letter?

MORTENSGÅRD.

You may read it for yourself, sir, when you please.

ROSMER.

But I don't understand——! What did she imagine the rumours to be about?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Firstly, that the Pastor had deserted the faith of his fathers. Your wife denied that absolutely—then. And next—h'm——

ROSMER.

Next?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Well, next she writes—rather confusedly—that she knows nothing of any sinful intrigue at Rosmersholm; that she has never been wronged in any way. And if any such rumours should get about, she implores me to say nothing of the matter in the "Beacon."

ROSMER.

Is no name mentioned?

MORTENSGÅRD.

None.

ROSMER.

Who brought you the letter?

MORTENSGÅRD.

I have promised not to say. It was handed to me one evening, at dusk.

ROSMER.

If you had made inquiries at the time, you would have learnt that my poor unhappy wife was not fully accountable for her actions.

MORTENSGÅRD.

I did make inquiries, Pastor Rosmer. But I must say that was not the impression I received.

ROSMER.

Was it not?—But what is your precise reason for telling me now about this incomprehensible old letter?

MORTENSGÅRD.

To impress on you the necessity for extreme prudence, Pastor Rosmer.

ROSMER.

In my life, do you mean?

MORTENSGÅRD.

Yes. You must remember that from to-day you have ceased to be a neutral.

ROSMER.

Then you have quite made up your mind that I must have something to conceal?

MORTENSGÅRD.

I don't know why an emancipated man should refrain from living his life out as fully as possible. But, as I said before, be exceedingly cautious in future. If anything should get abroad that conflicts with current prejudices, you may be sure the whole liberal movement will have to suffer for it.—Good-bye, Pastor Rosmer.

ROSMER.

Good-bye.

MORTENSGÅRD.

I shall go straight to the office and have the great news put into the "Beacon."

ROSMER.

Yes; omit nothing.

MORTENSGÅRD.

I shall omit nothing that the public need know.

[*He bows and goes out.* ROSMER *remains standing in the doorway while he goes down the stairs. The outer door is heard to close.*

ROSMER.

[*In the doorway, calls softly.*] Rebecca! Re—— H'm. [*Aloud.*] Madam Helseth,—is Miss West not there?

MADAM HELSETH.

[*From the hall.*] No, Pastor Rosmer, she's not here.

[*The curtain at the back is drawn aside.* REBECCA *appears in the doorway.*

REBECCA.

Rosmer!

ROSMER.

[*Turns.*] What! Were you in my room? My dear, what were you doing there?

REBECCA.

[*Goes up to him.*] I was listening.

ROSMER.

Oh, Rebecca, how could you?

REBECCA.

I could not help it. He said it so hatefully—that about my morning gown——

ROSMER.

Then you were there when Kroll——?

REBECCA.

Yes. I wanted to know what was lurking in his mind.

ROSMER.

I would have told you.

REBECCA.

You would scarcely have told me all. And certainly not in his own words.

ROSMER.

Did you hear everything, then?

REBECCA.

Nearly everything, I think. I had to go downstairs for a moment when Mortensgård came.

ROSMER.

And then you came back again——?

REBECCA.

Don't be vexed with me, dear friend!

ROSMER.

Do whatever you think right. You are mistress of your own actions.—But what do you say to all this, Rebecca——? Oh, I seem never to have needed you so much before!

REBECCA.

Both you and I have been prepared for what must happen some time.

ROSMER.

No, no—not for this.

REBECCA.

Not for this?

ROSMER.

I knew well enough that sooner or later our beautiful, pure friendship might be misinterpreted and soiled. Not by Kroll—I could never have believed such a thing of him—but by all those other people with the coarse souls and the ignoble eyes. Oh yes—I had reason enough for keeping our alliance so jealously concealed. It was a dangerous secret.

REBECCA.

Oh, why should we care what all those people think! We know in our own hearts that we are blameless.

ROSMER.

Blameless? I? Yes, I thought so—till to-day. But now—now, Rebecca——?

REBECCA.

Well, what now?

ROSMER.

How am I to explain Beata's terrible accusation?

REBECCA.

[*Vehemently.*] Oh, don't speak of Beata! Don't think of Beata any more! You were just beginning to shake off the hold she has upon you, even in the grave.

ROSMER.

Since I have heard all this, she seems, in a ghastly sort of way, to be alive again.

REBECCA.

Oh no—not that, Rosmer! Not that!

ROSMER.

Yes, I tell you. We must try to get to the bottom of this. What can possibly have led her to misinterpret things so fatally?

REBECCA.

You are surely not beginning to doubt that she was on the very verge of insanity?

ROSMER.

Oh yes—that is just what I can't feel quite certain of any longer. And besides—even if she was——

REBECCA.

If she was? Well, what then?

ROSMER.

I mean—where are we to look for the determining cause that drove her morbid spirit over the border-line of madness?

REBECCA.

Oh, why brood over problems no one can solve?

ROSMER.

I cannot help it, Rebecca. I cannot shake off these gnawing doubts, however much I may wish to.

REBECCA.

But it may become dangerous—this eternal dwelling upon one miserable subject.

ROSMER.

[*Walks about restlessly, in thought.*] I must have betrayed myself in one way or another. She must have noticed how happy I began to feel from the time you came to us.

REBECCA.

Yes but, dear, even if she did——?

ROSMER.

Be sure it didn't escape her that we read the same books—that the interest of discussing all the new ideas drew us together. Yet I cannot understand it! I was so careful to spare her. As I look back, it seems to me I made it the business of my life to keep her in ignorance of all our interests. Did I not, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

Yes, yes; certainly you did

ROSMER.

And you too. And yet——! Oh, it's terrible to think of! She must have gone about here—full of her morbid passion—saying never a word—watching us—noting everything—and misinterpreting everything.

REBECCA.

[*Pressing her hands together.*] Oh, I should never have come to Rosmersholm!

REBECCA

[*As if startled.*] To me! Do
stayed a day longer if she had?

ROSMER.

No, no, of course not.—Oh,
have fought! And alone too, l
quite alone!—and then, at last,
cusing victory—in the mill-race.
[*Throws himself into the ch*
with his elbows on the t
hands.

REBECCA

[*Approaches him cautiously*
Rosmer. If it were in your pow
to you—to Rosmersholm—woul

ROSMER.

Oh, how do I know what I w
I can think of nothing but this
be recalled.

ROSMER.

Oh yes—I did indeed.—And now this crushing blow falls on me.

REBECCA.

[*Behind him, rests her arms on the chair-back.*] How beautiful it was when we sat in the twilight, in the room downstairs, helping each other to lay out our new life-plans! You were to set resolutely to work in the world—the living world of to-day, as you said. You were to go as a messenger of emancipation from home to home; to win over minds and wills; to create noble-men around you in wider and wider circles. Noble-men.

ROSMER.

Happy noble-men.

REBECCA.

Yes—happy.

ROSMER.

For it is happiness that ennobles, Rebecca.

REBECCA.

Should you not say—sorrow as well? A great sorrow?

ROSMER.

Yes—if one can get through it—over it—away from it.

REBECCA.

T h a t is what you must do.

REBEC

[*Bends over his chair-back, a*
is it you mean, Rosmer?

ROSM

[*Looking up at her.*] Peace

REBEC

[*Recoils a step.*] Yes. Ini

ROSM

[*With his elbow on the tab*
hand, and looking straight t
traordinary penetration she s
she put all this together! F
orthodoxy——How could
did occur to her; and then it
then—yes, then of course i
all the rest possible. [*Sits*
hands through his hair.] C
ings! I shall never get rid
moment they w

ROSMER.

Yes, like that. Rushing forth in the darkness—in the silence.

REBECCA.

And because of this miserable figment of the brain, you will let slip the hold you were beginning to take upon the living world?

ROSMER.

You may well think it hard. Yes, hard, Rebecca. But I have no choice. How could I ever leave t h i s behind me?

REBECCA.

[*Behind his chair.*] By entering into new relations.

ROSMER.

[*Surprised, looks up.*] New relations?

REBECCA.

Yes, new relations to the outside world. Live, work, act. Don't sit here brooding and groping among insoluble enigmas.

ROSMER.

[*Rises.*] New relations? [*Walks across the floor, stops at the door and then comes back.*] One question occurs to me. Has it not occurred to you too, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

[*Drawing breath with difficulty.*] Let me—hear—what it is?

I believe our friendship will

ROSMER

That is not exactly what l
first brought us together, and
our common faith in a pure c
and woman——

REBECC

Yes, yes—what of that?

ROSM

I mean, that such a relatio
not presuppose a quiet, happ

REBE

What then?

ROS

But the life I must now loo
gle and unrest and strong a
my life, Rebecca! I will not
possibilities. I will not

ROSMER.

But can you not guess what is in my mind? Do you not know? Don't you see how I can best shake off all gnawing memories—all the unhappy past?

REBECCA.

How?

ROSMER.

By opposing to it a new, a living reality.

REBECCA.

[*Feeling for the chair-back.*] A living—— What do you mean?

ROSMER.

[*Comes nearer.*] Rebecca—if I were to ask you—will you be my second wife?

REBECCA.

[*For a moment speechless, then cries out with joy.*] Your wife! Your——! I!

ROSMER.

Come; let us try it. We two will be one. The place of the dead must stand empty no longer.

REBECCA.

I—in Beata's place——!

ROSMER.

Then she will be out of the saga—completely—for ever and ever.

through life with a dead body on
cast it off, Rebecca. And let u
freedom, in joy, in passion. You
wife I have ever had.

REBECCA

[*With self-command.*] Never
will never be your wife.

ROSMER.

What! Never! Do you not l
love me? Is there not already
friendship?

REBECCA

[*Puts her hands over her ears*
speak so, Rosmer! Don't say s

ROSMER.

[*Seizes her arm.*] Yes, yes—t
ise in our relation. Oh, I can
Do you not, Rebecca?

REBECCA

REBECCA.

It is still more impossible that I should be your wife. Never in this world can I marry you.

ROSMER.

[*Looks at her in surprise.*] You say "can"; and you say it so strangely. Why can you not?

REBECCA.

[*Seizes both his hands.*] Dear friend—both for your own sake and for mine—do not ask why. [*Lets go his hands.*] Do not, Rosmer.

[*Goes towards the door on the left.*

ROSMER.

Henceforth I can think of nothing but that one question—why?

REBECCA.

[*Turns and looks at him.*] Then it is all over.

ROSMER.

Between you and me?

REBECCA.

Yes.

ROSMER.

It will never be all over between us two. You will never leave Rosmersholm.

All over? How——?

REBECC

For then I will go the way tha
know it, Rosmer.

ROSMER

Rebecca——?

REBECC

[*In the doorway, nods slowly.*]

ROSMER

[*Stares, thunderstruck, at the d*
What—is—this?

ACT THIRD

The sitting-room at Rosmersholm. The window and the entrance door are open. The sun is shining outside. Forenoon.

REBECCA WEST, *dressed as in the first Act, stands at the window, watering and arranging the flowers. Her crochet-work lies in the arm-chair.* MADAM HELSETH *is moving about, dusting the furniture with a feather-brush.*

REBECCA.

[*After a short silence.*] I can't understand the Pastor remaining so long upstairs to-day.

MADAM HELSETH.

Oh, he often does that. But he'll soon be down now, I should think.

REBECCA.

Have you seen anything of him?

MADAM HELSETH.

I caught a glimpse of him when I went upstairs with his coffee. He was in his bedroom, dressing.

REBECCA.

I asked because he was a little out of sorts yesterday.

MADAM HELSETH.

He didn't look well. I wonder if there isn't something amiss between him and his brother-in-law.

REBECCA.

What do you think it can be?

MADAM HELSETH.

I couldn't say. Perhaps it's that Mortensgård that has been setting them against each other.

REBECCA.

Likely enough.—Do you know anything of this Peter Mortensgård?

MADAM HELSETH.

No indeed. How could you think so, Miss? A fellow like him.

REBECCA.

Do you mean because he edits such a low paper?

MADAM HELSETH.

Oh, it's not only t h a t.—You must have heard, Miss that he had a child by a marrried woman that had been deserted by her husband?

REBECCA.

Yes, I have heard of it. But it must have been long before I came here.

MADAM HELSETH.

It's true he was very young at the time; and she should have known better. He wanted to marry her too; but of course he couldn't do that. And I don't say he hasn't paid dear for it.—But, good Lord, Mortensgård has got on in the world since those days. There's a many people run after h i m now.

REBECCA.

Yes, most of the poor people bring their affairs to him when they're in any trouble.

MADAM HELSETH.

Ah, and others too, perhaps, besides the poor folk——

REBECCA.

[*Looks at her furtively.*] Indeed.

MADAM HELSETH.

[*By the sofa, dusting away vigorously.*] Perhaps the last people you would think likely to, Miss.

REBECCA.

[*Busy with the flowers.*] Come now, that's only an idea of yours, Madam Helseth. You can't be s u r e of what you're saying.

MADAM HELSETH.

You think I can't, Miss? But I can tell you I am. Why—if you m u s t know it—I once took a letter in to Mortensgård myself.

REBECCA.

[*Turning.*] No—did you?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, indeed I did. And a letter that was written here at Rosmersholm too.

REBECCA.

Really, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, that it was. And it was on fine paper, and there was a fine red seal on it too.

REBECCA.

And it was given to y o u to deliver? Then, my dear Madam Helseth, it's not difficult to guess who wrote it.

MADAM HELSETH.

Well?

REBECCA.

It must have been something that poor Mrs. Rosmer, in her morbid state——

MADAM HELSETH.

It's you that say t h a t, Miss, not me.

REBECCA.

But what was in the letter? Oh, I forgot——y o u can't know that.

MADAM HELSETH.

H'm; what if I did know it, all the same?

REBECCA.

Did she tell you what she was writing about?

MADAM HELSETH.

No, she didn't exactly do that. But Mortensgård, when he'd read it, he began questioning me backwards and forwards and up and down, so that I soon guessed what was in it.

REBECCA.

Then what do you think it was? Oh my dear, good Madam Helseth, do tell me.

MADAM HELSETH.

Oh no, Miss. Not for the whole world.

REBECCA.

Oh you can surely tell me. We two are such good friends.

MADAM HELSETH.

Lord preserve me from telling you anything about that, Miss. I can only tell you that it was something horrible that they'd got the poor sick lady to believe.

REBECCA.

Who had got her to believe it?

MADAM HELSETH.

Wicked people, Miss West. Wicked people.

REBECCA.

Wicked——?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, I say it again. They must have been real wicked people.

REBECCA.

And who do you think it could have been?

MADAM HELSETH.

Oh, I know well enough what to think. But Lord forbid *I* should say anything. To be sure there's a certain lady in the town—h'm!

REBECCA.

I can see that you mean Mrs. Kroll.

MADAM HELSETH.

Ah, she's a fine one, she is. She has always been the great lady with me. And she's never had any too much love for you neither.

REBECCA.

Do you think Mrs. Rosmer was in her right mind when she wrote that letter to Mortensgård?

MADAM HELSETH.

It's a queer thing a person's mind, Miss. Clean out of her mind I don't think she was.

REBECCA.

But she seemed to go distracted when she learned that she must always be childless. It was t h a t that unsettled her reason.

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, poor lady, t h a t was a dreadful blow to her.

REBECCA.

[*Takes up her crochet and sits in a chair by the window.*] But after all—don't you think it was a good thing for the Pastor, Madam Helseth?

MADAM HELSETH.

What, Miss?

REBECCA.

That there were no children. Don't you think so?

MADAM HELSETH.

H'm, I'm sure I don't know what to say about that.

REBECCA.

Oh yes, believe me, it was fortunate for him. Pastor Rosmer is not the man to have crying children about his house.

MADAM HELSETH.

Ah, Miss, little children don't cry at Rosmersholm.

REBECCA.

[*Looks at her.*] Don't cry?

MADAM HELSETH.

No. As long as people can remember, children have never been known to cry in this house.

REBECCA.

That's very strange.

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes; isn't it? But it runs in the family. And then there's another strange thing. When they grow up, they never laugh. Never, as long as they live.

REBECCA.

Why, how extraordinary——

MADAM HELSETH.

Have you ever once heard or seen the Pastor laugh, Miss?

REBECCA.

No—now that I think of it, I almost believe you are right. But I don't think any one laughs much in this part of the country.

MADAM HELSETH.

No, they don't. They say it began at Rosmersholm. And then I suppose it spread round about, as if it was catching-like.

REBECCA.

You are a very wise woman, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH.

Oh, Miss, you mustn't sit there and make fun of me. [*Listens.*] Hush, hush—here's the Pastor coming down. He doesn't like to see dusting going on.

[*She goes out to the right*

JOHANNES ROSMER, *with his hat and stick in his hand, enters from the hall.*

ROSMER.

Good morning, Rebecca.

REBECCA.

Good morning, dear. [*A moment after—crocheting.*] Are you going out?

ROSMER.

Yes.

REBECCA.

It's a beautiful day.

ROSMER.

You didn't look in on me this morning.

REBECCA.

No, I didn't. Not to-day.

ROSMER.

Do you not intend to in future?

REBECCA.

Oh, I don't know yet, dear.

ROSMER.

Has anything come for me?

REBECCA.

The "County News" has come.

ROSMER.

The "County News"?

REBECCA.

There it is on the table.

ROSMER.

[*Puts down his hat and stick.*] Is there anything——?

REBECCA.

Yes.

ROSMER.

And you didn't send it up?

REBECCA.

You will read it soon enough.

ROSMER.

Oh, indeed? [*Takes the paper and reads, standing by the table*]—What!—"We cannot warn our readers too earnestly against unprincipled renegades." [*Looks at her.*] They call me a renegade, Rebecca.

REBECCA.

They mention no names.

ROSMER.

That makes no difference. [*Reads on.*] "Secret traitors to the good cause."—"Judas-natures, who make brazen confession of their apostasy as soon as they think the most convenient and—profitable moment has arrived." "Ruthless befouling of a name honoured through generations"—"in the confident hope of a suitable reward from the party in momentary power." [*Lays down the paper on the table.*] And they can say such things of me! —Men who have known me so long and so well! Things they themselves don't believe. Things they know there is not a word of truth in—they print them all the same.

REBECCA.

That is not all.

ROSMER.

[*Takes up the paper again.*] "Inexperience and lack of judgment the only excuse"—"pernicious influence—possibly extending to matters which, for the present, we do not wish to make subjects of public discussion or accusation." [*Looks at her.*] What is this?

REBECCA.

It is aimed at me, plainly enough.

ROSMER.

[*Lays down the paper.*] Rebecca,—this is the conduct of dishonourable men.

REBECCA.

Yes, they need scarcely be so contemptuous of Mortensgård.

ROSMER.

[*Walks about the room.*] Something m u s t be done. All that is good in human nature will go to ruin, if this is allowed to go on. But it s h a l l not go on! Oh, what a joy—what a joy it would be to me to let a little light into all this gloom and ugliness!

REBECCA.

[*Rises.*] Ah yes, Rosmer. In that you have a great and glorious object to live for.

ROSMER.

Only think, if I could rouse them to see themselves as they are; teach them to repent and blush before their better natures; bring them together in mutual forbearance—in love, Rebecca!

REBECCA.

Yes, put your whole strength into that, and you m u s t succeed

ROSMER.

I think success must be possible. Oh, what a delight it would be then to live one's life! No more malignant wrangling; only emulation. All eyes fixed on the same goal. Every mind, every will pressing forward—upward—each by the path its nature prescribes for it. Happiness for all—through all. [*Happens to look out of the window, starts, and says sadly.*] Ah! Not through me.

REBECCA.

Not——? Not through you?

ROSMER.

Nor f o r me.

REBECCA.

Oh Rosmer, do not let such doubts take hold of you.

ROSMER.

Happiness—dear Rebecca—happiness is above all things the calm, glad certainty of innocence.

REBECCA.

[*Looks straight before her.*] Yes, innocence——

ROSMER.

Oh, y o u cannot know what guilt means. But I——

REBECCA.

You least of all!

ROSMER.

[*Points out of the window.*] The mill-race.

REBECCA.

Oh Rosmer——!

MADAM HELSETH *looks in at the door.*

MADAM HELSETH.

Miss West!

REBECCA.

Presently, presently. Not now.

[*Uneasily.*] Was it anything for

REBECCA.

No, only something about the hous
to go out into the fresh air, dear R
take a good long walk.

ROSMER.

[*Takes up his hat.*] Yes, come.

REBECCA.

No, dear, I can't just now. You
shake off all these gloomy thoughts.

ROSMER.

I am afraid I shall never shake t

REBECCA.

Oh, that such baseless fancies sh
hold of you——!

ROSMER.

Not so baseless I am afraid Reb

REBECCA.

In what?

ROSMER.

In her belief that I loved you, Rebecca.

REBECCA.

Right in t h a t!

ROSMER.

[*Lays his hat down on the table.*] The question that haunts me is this: were we two not deceiving ourselves all the time—when we called our relation friendship?

REBECCA.

You mean that it might as well have been called——?

ROSMER.

——love. Yes, Rebecca, that is what I mean. Even while Beata was alive, all my thoughts were for you. It was you alone I longed for. It was when you were by my side that I felt the calm gladness of utter content. If you think it over, Rebecca—did we not feel for each other from the first a sort of sweet, secret child-love—desireless, dreamless? Was it not so with you? Tell me.

REBECCA.

[*Struggling with herself.*] Oh—I don't know what to answer.

ROSMER.

And it was this close-linked life in and for each other that we took for friendship. No, Rebecca—our bond has

been a spiritual marriage—perhaps from the very first. That is why there is guilt on my soul. I had no right to such happiness—it was a sin against Beata.

REBECCA.

No right to live happily? Do you believe that, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

She looked at our relation with the eyes of h e r love—judged it after the fashion of h e r love. Inevitably. Beata could not have judged otherwise than she did.

REBECCA.

But how can you accuse yourself because of Beata's delusion?

ROSMER.

It was love for me—h e r kind of love—that drove her into the mill-race. That is an immovable fact, Rebecca. And that is what I can never get over.

REBECCA.

Oh, think of nothing but the great, beautiful task you have devoted your life to.

ROSMER.

[*Shakes his head.*] It can never be accomplished, dear. Not by me. Not after what I have come to know.

REBECCA.

Why not by you?

ROSMER.

Because no cause ever triumphs that has its origin in sin.

REBECCA.

[*Vehemently.*] Oh, these are only ancestral doubts—ancestral fears—ancestral scruples. They say the dead come back to Rosmersholm in the shape of rushing white horses. I think this shows that it is true.

ROSMER.

Be that as it may; what does it matter, so long as I cannot rid myself of the feeling? And believe me, Rebecca, it is as I tell you. The cause that is to win a lasting victory must have for its champion a happy, an innocent man.

REBECCA.

Is happiness so indispensable to you, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

Happiness? Yes, dear,—it is.

REBECCA.

To you, who can never laugh?

ROSMER.

Yes, in spite of that. Believe me, I have a great capacity for happiness.

REBECCA.

Now go for your walk, dear. A good long walk. Do you hear?—See, here is your hat. And your stick too.

ROSMER.

[*Takes both.*] Thanks. And you won't come with me?

REBECCA.

No, no; I can't just now.

ROSMER.

Very well, then. You are with me none the less.

[*He goes out by the entrance door.* REBECCA *waits a moment, cautiously watching his departure from behind the open door; then she goes to the door on the right.*

REBECCA.

[*Opens the door, and says in a low tone.*] Now, Madam Helseth. You can show him in now.

[*Goes towards the window.*

A moment after RECTOR KROLL *enters from the right. He bows silently and formally, and keeps his hat in his hand.*

KROLL.

He has gone out?

REBECCA

Yes.

KROLL.

Does he usually stay out long?

REBECCA.

Yes, he does. But one cannot count on him to-day. So if you don't care to meet him——

KROLL.

No, no. It is you I want to speak to,—quite alone.

REBECCA.

Then we had better not lose time. Sit down, Rector.

[*She sits in the easy-chair by the window.* RECTOR KROLL *sits on a chair beside her.*

KROLL.

Miss West—you can scarcely imagine how deeply and painfully I have taken this to heart—this change in Johannes Rosmer.

REBECCA.

We expected it would be so—at first.

KROLL.

Only at first?

REBECCA.

Rosmer was confident that sooner or later you would join him.

KROLL.

I?

REBECCA.

You and all his other friends.

KROLL.

Ah, there you see! That shows the infirmity of his judgment in all that concerns men and practical life

REBECCA.

But after all—since he feels it a necessity to emancipate himself on all sides——

KROLL.

Yes, but wait—that is just what I do not believe.

REBECCA.

What d o you believe then?

KROLL.

I believe that y o u are at the bottom of it all.

REBECCA.

It is your wife who has put that in your head, Rector Kroll.

KROLL.

No matter who has put it in my head. What is certain is that I feel a strong suspicion—an exceedingly strong suspicion—when I think things over, and piece together all I know of your behaviour ever since you came here.

REBECCA.

[*Looks at him.*] I seem to recollect a time when you felt an exceedingly strong f a i t h in me, dear Rector. I might almost call it a w a r m faith.

KROLL.

[*In a subdued voice.*] Whom could you not bewitch—if you tried?

REBECCA.

Did I try——?

KROLL.

Yes, you did. I am no longer such a fool as to believe that there was any feeling in the matter. You simply wanted to get a footing at Rosmersholm—to strike root here—and in that I was to serve you. Now I see it.

REBECCA.

You seem utterly to have forgotten that it was Beata who begged and implored me to come out here?

KROLL.

Yes, when you had bewitched her to. Can the feeling she came to entertain for you be called friendship? It was adoration—almost idolatry. It developed into—what shall I call it?—a sort of desperate passion.—Yes, that is the right word for it.

REBECCA.

Be so good as to recollect the state your sister was in. So far as I am concerned, I don't think any one can accuse me of being hysterical.

KROLL.

No; that you certainly are not. But that makes you all the more dangerous to the people you want to get into your power. It is easy for you to weigh your acts and calculate consequences—just because your heart is cold.

REBECCA.

Cold? Are you so sure of that?

KROLL.

I am quite certain of it now. Otherwise you could never have lived here year after year without faltering in the pursuit of your object. Well, well—you have gained your end. You have got him and everything into your power. But in order to do so, you have not scrupled to make him unhappy.

REBECCA.

That is not true. It is not I—it is you yourself that have made him unhappy.

KROLL.

I?

REBECCA.

Yes, when you led him to imagine that he was responsible for Beata's terrible end.

KROLL.

Does he feel that so deeply, then?

REBECCA.

How can you doubt it? A mind so sensitive as his—

KROLL.

I thought that an emancipated man, so called, was above all such scruples.—But there we have it! Oh yes—I admit I knew how it would be The descendant of

the men that look down on us from these walls—how could he hope to cut himself adrift from all that has been handed down without a break from generation to generation?

REBECCA.

[*Looks down thoughtfully.*] Johannes Rosmer's spirit is deeply rooted in his ancestry. That is very certain.

KROLL.

Yes, and you should have taken that fact into consideration, if you had felt any affection for him. But that sort of consideration was no doubt beyond you. There is such an immeasurable difference between your antecedents and his.

REBECCA.

What antecedents do you mean?

KROLL.

I am speaking of your origin—your family antecedents, Miss West.

REBECCA.

Oh, indeed! Yes, it is quite true that I come of very humble folk. Nevertheless——

KROLL.

I am not thinking of rank and position. I allude to your moral antecedents.

REBECCA.

Moral——? In what sense?

KROLL.

The circumstances of your birth.

REBECCA.

What do you mean?

KROLL.

I only mention the matter because it accounts for your whole conduct.

REBECCA.

I do not understand this. You must explain.

KROLL.

I really did not suppose you could require an explanation. Otherwise it would have been very odd that you should have let Dr. West adopt you——

REBECCA.

[*Rises.*] Ah! Now I understand.

KROLL.

——and that you should have taken his name. Your mother's name was Gamvik.

REBECCA.

[*Walks across the room.*] My father's name was Gamvik, Rector Kroll.

KROLL.

Your mother's business must have brought her very frequently into contact with the parish doctor.

REBECCA.

Yes, it did.

KROLL.

And then he takes you into his house—as soon as your mother dies. He treats you harshly; and yet you stay with him. You know that he won't leave you a halfpenny—as a matter of fact, you only got a case full of books—and yet you stay on; you bear with him; you nurse him to the last.

REBECCA.

[*Stands by the table, looking scornfully at him.*] And you account for all this by assuming that there was something immoral—something criminal about my birth?

KROLL.

I attribute your care for him to involuntary filial instinct. Indeed I believe your whole conduct is determined by your origin.

REBECCA.

[*Vehemently.*] But there is not a single word of truth in what you say! And I can prove it! Dr. West did not come to Finmark till after I was born.

KROLL.

Excuse me, Miss West. He settled there the year before. I have assured myself of that.

REBECCA.

You are mistaken, I say! You are utterly mistaken.

KROLL.

You told me the day before yesterday that you were nine-and-twenty—in your thirtieth year.

REBECCA.

Indeed! Did I say so?

KROLL.

Yes, you did. And I can calculate from that——

REBECCA.

Stop! You needn't calculate. I may as well tell you at once: I am a year older than I give myself out to be.

KROLL.

[*Smiles incredulously.*] Really! I am surprised! What can be the reason of that?

REBECCA.

When I had passed twenty-five, it seemed to me I was getting altogether too old for an unmarried woman. And so I began to lie about my age.

KROLL.

You? An emancipated woman! Have you prejudices about the age for marriage?

REBECCA.

Yes, it was idiotic of me—idiotic and absurd. But some folly or other will always cling to us, not to be shaken off. We are made so.

KROLL.

Well, so be it; but my calculation may be right, none the less. For Dr. West was up there on a short visit the year before he got the appointment.

REBECCA.

[*With a vehement outburst.*] It is not true!

KROLL.

Is it not true?

REBECCA.

No. My mother never spoke of any such visit.

KROLL.

Did she not?

REBECCA.

No, never. Nor Dr. West either; not a word about it.

KROLL.

Might not that be because they both had reasons for suppressing a year? Just as you have done, Miss West. Perhaps it is a family foible.

REBECCA.

[*Walks about clenching and wringing her hands.*] It is impossible. You want to cheat me into believing it. This can never, never be true. It cannot! Never in this world——!

KROLL.

[*Rises.*] My dear Miss West—why in heaven's name are you so terribly excited? You quite frighten me! What am I to think—to believe——?

REBECCA.

Nothing! You are to think and believe nothing.

KROLL.

Then you must really tell me how you can take this affair—this possibility—so terribly to heart.

REBECCA.

[*Controlling herself.*] It is perfectly simple, Rector Kroll. I have no wish to be taken for an illegitimate child.

KROLL.

Indeed! Well well, let us be satisfied with that explanation—in the meantime. But in that case you must still have a certain—prejudice on that point too?

REBECCA.

Yes, I suppose I have.

KROLL.

Ah, I fancy it is much the same with most of what you call your "emancipation." You have read yourself into a number of new ideas and opinions. You have got a sort of smattering of recent discoveries in various fields—discoveries that seem to overthrow certain principles

which have hitherto been held impregnable and unassailable. But all this has only been a matter of the intellect, Miss West—a superficial acquisition. It has not passed into your blood.

REBECCA.

[*Thoughtfully.*] Perhaps you are right.

KROLL.

Yes, look into your own mind, and you will see! And if this is the case with you, one may easily guess how it must be with Johannes Rosmer. It is sheer, unmitigated madness—it is running blindfold to destruction—for h i m to think of coming openly forward and confessing himself an apostate! Only think—a man of his sensitive nature! Imagine h i m disowned and persecuted by the circle of which he has always formed a part—exposed to ruthless attacks from all the best people in the community! He is not—he never can be the man to endure all that.

REBECCA.

He m u s t endure it! It is too late now for him to retreat.

KROLL.

Not at all too late. By no means. What has happened can be hushed up—or at least explained away as a mere temporary aberration, however deplorable. But—one measure is certainly indispensable.

REBECCA.

And what is that?

KROL

Yes. You must make him

REBEC

Then you absolutely cann
idea that our position requir
call it?

KROL

I would rather not go in
But I believe I have noticed
break through all so-called pr

REBEC

In the relation between ma

KROL

Yes,—to speak plainly—I t

REBEC

[*Wanders across the room ar*

REBECCA.

Oh, well—please let us drop the subject. Ah,—there he comes.

KROLL.

Already! Then I will go.

REBECCA.

[*Goes towards him.*] No—please stay. There is something I want you to hear.

KROLL.

Not now. I don't feel as if I could bear to see him.

REBECCA.

I beg you to stay. Do! If not, you will regret it by-and-by. It is the last time I shall ask you for anything.

KROLL.

[*Looks at her in surprise and puts down his hat.*] Very well, Miss West—so be it, then.

A short silence. Then JOHANNES ROSMER *enters from the hall.*

ROSMER.

[*Sees the* RECTOR, *and stops in the doorway.*] What!—Are y o u here?

REBECCA.

He did not wish to meet you, dear.[1]

[1] In the original, Rebecca here addresses Rosmer as "*du*" for the first time in Kroll's presence.

other. That is one result of o

KROL

Was t h a t what you wan

REBEC

That—and a little more.

ROSM

[*Comes forward.*] What is t

KROL

I wanted to try once more
back to us.

ROSM

[*Points to the newspaper.*]
paper?

KROL

KROLL.

That would have been to betray the cause I serve. And, besides, it was not in my power.

REBECCA.

[*Tears the paper into shreds, crushes up the pieces and throws them behind the stove.*] There! Now it is out of sight. And let it be out of mind too. For there will be nothing more of that sort, Rosmer.

KROLL.

Ah, if you could only make sure of t h a t !

REBECCA.

Come, let us sit down, dear. All three of us. And then I will tell you everything.

ROSMER.

[*Seats himself mechanically.*] What has come over you, Rebecca? This unnatural calmness—what is it?

REBECCA.

The calmness of resolution. [*Seats herself.*] Pray sit down too, Rector.

[RECTOR KROLL *seats himself on the sofa.*

ROSMER.

Resolution, you say? What resolution?

REBECCA.

I am going to give you back what you require in order to live your life. Dear friend, you shall have your happy innocence back again!

ROSMER.

What can you mean?

REBECCA.

I have only to tell you something. That will be enough.

ROSMER.

Well!

REBECCA.

When I came down here from Finmark—along with Dr. West—it seemed to me that a great, wide new world was opening up before me. The Doctor had taught me all sorts of things—all the fragmentary knowledge of life that I possessed in those days. [*With a struggle and in a scarcely audible voice.*] And then——

KROLL.

And then?

ROSMER.

But Rebecca—I know all this.

REBECCA.

[*Mastering herself.*] Yes, yes—you are right. You know enough about this.

KROLL.

[*Looks hard at her.*] Perhaps I had better go.

REBECCA.

No, please stay where you are, my dear Rector. [*To* ROSMER.] Well, you see, this was how it was—I wanted to take my share in the life of the new era that was dawning, with all its new ideas.—Rector Kroll told me one day that Ulric Brendel had had great influence over you while you were still a boy. I thought it must surely be possible for me to carry on his work.

ROSMER.

You came here with a secret design——?

REBECCA.

We two, I thought, should march onward in freedom, side by side. Ever onward. Ever farther and farther to the front. But between you and perfect emancipation there rose that dismal, insurmountable barrier.

ROSMER.

What barrier do you mean?

REBECCA.

I mean this, Rosmer: You could grow into freedom only in the clear, fresh sunshine—and here you were pining, sickening in the gloom of such a marriage.

ROSMER.

You have never before spoken to me of my marriage in t h a t tone.

REBECCA.

No, I did not dare to, for I should have frightened you.

KROLL.

[*Nods to* ROSMER.] Do you hear t h a t?

REBECCA.

[*Goes on.*] But I saw quite well where your deliverance lay—your only deliverance. And then I went to work.

ROSMER.

Went to work? In what way?

KROLL.

Do you mean that——?

REBECCA.

Yes, Rosmer—— [*Rises.*] Sit still. You too, Rector Kroll. But now it must out. It was not you, Rosmer. You are innocent. It was *I* that lured—that ended in luring Beata out into the paths of delusion——

ROSMER.

[*Springs up.*] Rebecca!

KROLL.

[*Rises from the sofa.*] The paths of delusion!

REBECCA.

The paths—that led to the mill-race. Now you know it, both of you.

ROSMER.

[*As if stunned.*] But I don't understand—— What is it she is saying? I don't understand a word——!

KROLL.

Oh yes, Rosmer, I am beginning to understand.

ROSMER.

But what did you do? What can you possibly have told her? There was nothing—absolutely nothing to tell!

REBECCA.

She came to know that you were working yourself free from all the old prejudices.

ROSMER.

Yes, but that was not the case at that time.

REBECCA.

I knew that it soon would be.

KROLL.

[*Nods to* ROSMER.] Aha!

ROSMER.

And then? What more? I must know all now.

REBECCA.

Some time after—I begged and implored her to let me go away from Rosmersholm.

ROSMER.

Why did you want to go—then?

REBECCA.

I did not want to go; I wanted to stay here, where I was. But I told her that it would be best for us all—that I should go away in time. I gave her to understand that if I stayed here any longer, I could not—I could not tell—what might happen.

ROSMER.

Then this is what you said and did!

REBECCA.

Yes, Rosmer.

ROSMER.

T h i s is what you call "going to work!"

REBECCA.

[*In a broken voice.*] I called it so, yes.

ROSMER.

[*After a pause.*] Have you confessed all now, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

Yes.

KROLL.

Not all.

REBECCA.

[*Looks at him in fear.*] What more should there be?

KROLL.

Did you not at last give Beata to understand that it was necessary—not only that it would be wisest, but that it was necessary—both for your own sake and Rosmer's, that you should go away somewhere—as soon as possible? Well?

REBECCA.

[*Low and indistinctly.*] Perhaps I did say something of the sort.

ROSMER.

[*Sinks into the arm-chair by the window.*] And this tissue of lies and deceit she—my unhappy, sick wife believed in! Believed in it so firmly! So immovably! [*Looks up at* REBECCA.] And she never turned to me. Never said one word to me! Oh, Rebecca,—I can see it in your face—you dissuaded her from it!

REBECCA.

She had conceived a fixed idea that she, as a childless wife, had no right to be here. And then she imagined that it was her duty to you to efface herself.

ROSMER.

And you—you did nothing to disabuse her of the idea?

REBECCA.

No.

KROLL.

Perhaps you confirmed her in it? Answer me! Did you not?

REBECCA.

I believe she may have understood me so.

ROSMER.

Yes, yes—and in every thing she bowed before your will. And she did efface herself! [*Springs up.*] How could you—how could you play this ghastly game!

REBECCA.

It seemed to me I had to choose between your life and hers, Rosmer.

KROLL.

[*Severely and impressively.*] That choice was not for y o u to make.

REBECCA.

[*Vehemently.*] You think then that I was cool and calculating and self-possessed all the time! I was not the same woman then that I am now, as I stand here telling it all. Besides, there are two sorts of will in us I believe! I wanted Beata away, by one means or another; but I never really believed that it would come to pass. As I felt my way forward, at each step I ventured, I seemed to hear something within me cry out: No farther! Not a step farther! And yet I c o u l d not stop. I h a d to venture the least little bit farther. Only one hair's-breadth more. And then one more—and always one more.—And then it happened.—That is the way such things come about. [*A short silence.*

ROSMER.

[*To* REBECCA.] What do you think lies before y o u now? After this?

REBECCA.

Things must go with me as they will. It doesn't greatly matter.

KROLL.

Not a word of remorse! Is it possible you feel none?

REBECCA.

[*Coldly putting aside his question.*] Excuse me, Rector Kroll—that is a matter which concerns no one but me. I must settle it with myself.

KROLL.

[*To* ROSMER.] And this is the woman you are living under the same roof with—in the closest intimacy! [*Looks round at the pictures.*] Oh if those that are gone could see us now!

ROSMER.

Are you going back to town?

KROLL.

[*Takes up his hat.*] Yes. The sooner the better.

ROSMER.

[*Does the same.*] Then I will go with you.

KROLL.

Will you! Ah yes, I was sure we had not lost you for good.

ROSMER.

Come then, Kroll! Come!

[*Both go out through the hall without looking at* REBECCA.

[*After a moment,* REBECCA *goes cautiously to the window and looks out through the flowers.*

REBECCA.

[*Speaks to herself under her breath.*] Not over the foot-bridge to-day either. He goes round. Never across the mill-race. Never. [*Leaves the window.*] Well, well, well!

[*Goes and pulls the bell-rope; a moment after,* MADAM HELSETH *enters from the right.*

MADAM HELSETH.

What is it, Miss?

REBECCA.

Madam Helseth, would you be so good as to have my trunk brought down from the garret?

MADAM HELSETH.

Your trunk?

REBECCA.

Yes—the brown sealskin trunk, you know.

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, yes. But, Lord preserve us—are you going on a journey, Miss?

REBECCA.

Yes—now I am going on a journey, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH.

And immediately!

REBECCA.

As soon as I have packed up.

MADAM HELSETH.

Well, I've never heard the like of that! But you'll come back again soon, Miss, of course?

REBECCA.

I shall never come back again.

MADAM HELSETH.

Never! Dear Lord, what will things be like at Rosmersholm when you're gone, Miss? And the poor Pastor was just beginning to be so happy and comfortable.

REBECCA.

Yes, but I have taken fright to-day, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH.

Taken fright! Dear, dear! how was that?

REBECCA.

I thought I saw something like a glimpse of white horses.

MADAM HELSETH.

White horses! In broad daylight!

REBECCA.

Oh, they are abroad early and late—the white horses of Rosmersholm. [*With a change of tone.*] Well,—about the trunk, Madam Helseth.

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, yes. The trunk. [*Both go out to the right.*

ACT FOURTH

The sitting-room at Rosmersholm. Late evening. A lighted lamp, with a shade over it, on the table.

REBECCA WEST *stands by the table, packing some small articles in a hand-bag. Her cloak, hat, and the white crocheted shawl are hanging over the back of the sofa.*

MADAM HELSETH *enters from the right.*

MADAM HELSETH.

[*Speaks in a low voice and appears ill at ease.*] All your things have been taken down, Miss. They are in the kitchen passage.

REBECCA.

Very well. You have ordered the carriage?

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes. The coachman wants to know what time he ought to be here.

REBECCA.

About eleven o'clock, I think. The steamer starts at midnight.

MADAM HELSETH.

[*Hesitates a little.*] But the Pastor? If he shouldn't be home by that time?

REBECCA.

I shall go all the same. If I don't see him, you can tell him that I will write to him—a long letter. Tell him that.

MADAM HELSETH.

Yes, writing—that may be all very well. But, poor Miss West—I do think you should try to speak to him once more.

REBECCA.

Perhaps so. And yet—perhaps not.

MADAM HELSETH.

Well—that I should live to see this! I never thought of such a thing.

REBECCA.

MADAM HELSETH.

I mean what's right and true, Miss. He shouldn't get out of it in t h i s way, that he shouldn't.

REBECCA.

[*Looks at her.*] Come now, Madam Helseth, tell me plainly: what do you think is the reason I am going away?

MADAM HELSETH.

Well, Heaven forgive us, I suppose it can't be helped, Miss. Ah, well, well, well! But I certainly don't think the Pastor's behaving handsome-like. Mortensgård had some excuse; for h e r husband was alive, so that they two couldn't marry, however much they wanted to. But as for the Pastor—h'm!

REBECCA.

[*With a faint smile.*] Could you have believed such a thing of Pastor Rosmer and me?

MADAM HELSETH.

No, never in this world. At least, I mean—not until to-day.

REBECCA.

But to-day, then——?

MADAM HELSETH.

Well,—after all the horrible things that they tell me the papers are saying about the Pastor——

REBECCA.

Aha!

MADAM HELSETH.

For the man that can go over to Mortensgård's religion—good Lord, I can believe anything of him.

REBECCA.

Oh yes, I suppose so. But what about me? What have you to say about me?

MADAM HELSETH.

Lord preserve us, Miss—I don't see that there's much to be said against you. It's not so easy for a lone woman to be always on her guard, that's certain.—We're all of us human, Miss West.

REBECCA.

That's very true, Madam Helseth. We are all of us human.—What are you listening to?

MADAM HELSETH.

[*In a low voice.*] Oh Lord,—if I don't believe that's him coming.

REBECCA.

[*Starts.*] After all then——? [*Resolutely.*] Well well; so be it.

JOHANNES ROSMER *enters from the hall.*

ROSMER.

[*Sees the hand-bag, etc., turns to* REBECCA, *and asks.*] What does this mean?

REBECCA.

I am going.

ROSMER.

At once?

REBECCA.

Yes. [*To* MADAM HELSETH.] Eleven o'clock then.

MADAM HELSETH.

Very well, Miss. [*Goes out to the right.*

ROSMER.

[*After a short pause.*] Where are you going to, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

North, by the steamer.

ROSMER.

North? What takes you to the North?

REBECCA.

It was there I came from.

ROSMER.

But you have no ties there now.

REBECCA.

I have none here either.

ROSMER.

What do you think of doing?

REBECCA.

I don't know. I only want to have done with it all.

ROSMER.

To have done with it?

REBECCA.

Rosmersholm has broken me.

ROSMER.

[*His attention aroused.*] Do you say that?

REBECCA.

Broken me utterly and hopelessly.—I had a free and fearless will when I came here. Now I have bent my neck under a strange law.—From this day forth, I feel as if I had no courage for anything in the world.

ROSMER.

He gathered all our old friends together at his house. They have made it clear to me that the work of ennobling the minds of men—is not for me.—And besides, it is hopeless in itself, Rebecca.—I shall let it alone.

REBECCA.

Yes, yes—perhaps it is best so.

ROSMER.

Is t h a t what you say now? Do you think so n o w?

REBECCA.

I have come to think so—in the last few days.

ROSMER.

You are lying, Rebecca.

REBECCA.

Lying——!

ROSMER.

Yes, you are lying. You have never believed in me. You have never believed that I was man enough to carry the cause through to victory.

REBECCA.

I believed that we two together could do it.

ROSMER.

That is not true. You thought that you yourself could do something great in life; and that you could use me to

further your ends. I was to be a serviceable instrument to you—t h a t is what you thought.

REBECCA.

Listen to me, Rosmer——

ROSMER.

[*Seats himself listlessly on the sofa.*] Oh, what is the use? I see through it all now—I have been like a glove in your hands.

REBECCA.

Listen, Rosmer. Hear what I have to say. It will be for the last time. [*Sits in a chair close to the sofa.*] I intended to write you all about it—when I was back in the North. But I daresay it is best that you should hear it at once.

ROSMER.

Have you more confessions to make?

REBECCA.

The greatest of all is to come.

ROSMER.

The greatest?

REBECCA.

What you have never suspected. What gives light and shade to all the rest.

ROSMER.

[*Shakes his head.*] I don't understand you at all.

REBECCA.

It is perfectly true that I once schemed to gain a footing at Rosmersholm. I thought I could not fail to turn things to good account here. In one way or the other—you understand.

ROSMER.

Well, you accomplished your ends.

REBECCA.

I believe I could have accomplished anything, anything in the world—at that time. For I had still my fearless, free-born will. I knew no scruples—I stood in awe of no human tie.—But then began what has broken my will—and cowed me so pitiably for all my days.

ROSMER.

What began? Do not speak in riddles.

REBECCA.

It came over me,—this wild, uncontrollable passion——. Oh, Rosmer——!

ROSMER.

Passion? You——! For what?

REBECCA.

For you.

ROSMER.

[*Tries to spring up.*] What is this?

REBECCA.

[*Stops him.*] Sit still, dear; there is more to tell.

ROSMER.

And you mean to say—that you have loved me—in that way!

REBECCA.

I thought that it should be called love—then. Yes, I thought it was love. But it was not. It was what I said. It was a wild, uncontrollable passion.

ROSMER.

[*With difficulty.*] Rebecca, is it really you—you yourself—that you are speaking of?

REBECCA.

REBECCA.

Yes; for it was a life-and-death struggle between Beata and me at that time.

ROSMER.

Assuredly you were the strongest at Rosmersholm. Stronger than Beata and I together.

REBECCA.

I judged you rightly in so far that I was sure I could never reach you until you were a free man, both in circumstances—and in spirit.

ROSMER.

But I don't understand you, Rebecca. You—yourself—your whole conduct is an insoluble riddle to me. I am free now—both in spirit and in circumstances. You have reached the very goal you aimed at from the first. And yet——

REBECCA.

I have never stood farther from my goal than now.

ROSMER.

And yet I say—when I asked you yesterday—begged you to be my wife—you cried out, as if in fear, that it could never be.

REBECCA.

I cried out in despair, Rosmer.

ROSMER.

Why?

REBECCA.

Because Rosmersholm has sapped my strength. old fearless will has had its wings clipped here. crippled! The time is past when I had courage for thing in the world. I have lost the power of ac Rosmer.

ROSMER.

Tell me how this has come about.

REBECCA.

It has come about through my life with you.

ROSMER.

But how? How?

REBECCA.

When I was left alone with you here,—and when

thoughts without reserve—every tender and delicate feeling, just as it came to you—t h e n the great change came over me. Little by little, you understand. Almost imperceptibly—but at last with such overwhelming force that it reached to the depths of my soul.

ROSMER.

Oh, is this true, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

All the rest—the horrible sense-intoxicated desire—passed far, far away from me. All the whirling passions settled down into quiet and silence. Rest descended on my soul—a stillness as on one of our northern bird-cliffs under the midnight sun.

ROSMER.

Tell me more of this. Tell me all you can.

REBECCA.

There is not much more, dear. Only this—it was love that was born in me. The great self-denying love, that is content with life, as we two have lived it together.

ROSMER.

Oh, if I had only had the faintest suspicion of all this!

REBECCA.

It is best as it is. Yesterday—when you asked me if I would be your wife—I cried out with joy——

it has no energy left now—n

ROS

How do you account for w

REBE

It is the Rosmer view of l
at any rate—that has infecte

ROS

Infected?

REBE

And made it sick. Ensla
power over me before. You
bled my mind——

ROS

Oh that I could believe it

REBE

REBECCA.

——but it kills happiness.

ROSMER.

Do you think so, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

My happiness, at any rate.

ROSMER.

Yes, but are you so certain of that? If I were to ask you again now——? If I were to beg and entreat you——?

REBECCA.

Dear,—never speak of this again! It is impossible——! For you must know, Rosmer, I have a—a past behind me.

ROSMER.

More than what you have told me?

REBECCA.

Yes. Something different and something more.

ROSMER.

[*With a faint smile.*] Is it not strange, Rebecca? Some such idea has crossed my mind now and then.

REBECCA.

It has? And yet——? Even so——?

R

[*Turning it off.*] No,
Whatever it may be—I c

R

But I cannot.

R

Oh Rebecca——!

R

Yes, Rosmer—t h i s
now, when all life's hap
heart is changed, and my

R

Your past is dead, Re
any more—it is no part

R

Oh, you know that the

REBECCA.

Yes, innocence. That is the source of peace and happiness. T h a t was the vital truth you were to implant in the coming generation of happy noble-men——

ROSMER.

Oh, don't remind me of t h a t. It was only an abortive dream, Rebecca—an immature idea, that I myself no longer believe in.—Ah no, we cannot be ennobled from without, Rebecca.

REBECCA.

[*Softly.*] Not even by tranquil love, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

[*Thoughtfully.*] Yes—t h a t would be the great thing—the most glorious in life, almost—if it w e r e so. [*Moves uneasily.*] But how can I be certain of that? How convince myself?

REBECCA.

Do you not believe me, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

Oh Rebecca—how c a n I believe in you, fully? You who have all this while been cloaking, concealing such a multitude of things!—Now you come forward with something new. If you have a secret purpose in all this, tell me plainly what it is. Is there anything you want to gain by it? You know that I will gladly do everything I can for you

REBECCA

[*Wringing her hands.*] Oh this killing doubt——! Rosmer—Rosmer——!

ROSMER.

Yes, is it not terrible, Rebecca? But I cannot help it. I shall never be able to shake off the doubt. I can never be absolutely sure that you are mine in pure and perfect love.

REBECCA.

Is there nothing in the depths of your own heart that bears witness to the transformation in me? And tells you that it is due to you—and you alone?

ROSMER.

Oh Rebecca—I no longer believe in my power of transforming any one. My faith in myself is utterly dead. I believe neither in myself nor in you.

REBECCA.

[*Looks darkly at him.*] Then how will you be able to live your life?

ROSMER.

That I don't know. I cannot imagine how. I don't think I c a n live it.—And I know of nothing in the world that is worth living for.

REBECCA.

Oh, life—life will renew itself. Let us hold fast to it, Rosmer.—We shall leave it soon enough.

ROSMER.

[*Springs up restlessly.*] Then give me my faith again! My faith in y o u, Rebecca! My faith in your love! Proof! I must have proof!

REBECCA.

Proof? How can I give you proof——?

ROSMER.

You m u s t! [*Walks across the room.*] I cannot bear this desolation—this horrible emptiness—this—this——

[*A loud knock at the hall door.*

REBECCA.

[*Starts up from her chair.*] Ah—did you hear that?

The door opens. ULRIC BRENDEL *enters. He has a white shirt on, a black coat and a good pair of boots, with his trousers tucked into them. Otherwise he is dressed as in the first Act. He looks excited.*

ROSMER.

Ah, is it you, Mr. Brendel?

BRENDEL.

Johannes, my boy—hail—and farewell!

ROSMER.

Where are you going so late?

BRENDEL.

Downhill.

Something has happene
is it?

Bı

So you observe the tr
may. When I last set fo
you as a man of substance

R

Indeed! I don't quite

Bı

But as you see me this
on the ash-heap that was

R

If there is anything *I* c

Bı

You have preserved

BRENDEL.

Can you spare me an ideal or two?

ROSMER.

What do you say?

BRENDEL.

One or two cast-off ideals. It would be an act of charity. For I'm cleaned out, my boy. Ruined, beggared.

REBECCA.

Have you not delivered your lecture?

BRENDEL.

No, seductive lady. What do you think? Just as I am standing ready to pour forth the horn of plenty, I make the painful discovery that I am bankrupt.

REBECCA.

But all your unwritten works——?

BRENDEL.

For five-and-twenty years I have sat like a miser on his double-locked treasure-chest. And then yesterday—when I open it and want to display the treasure—there's none there! The teeth of time had ground it into dust. There was nix and nothing in the whole concern.

ROSMER.

But are you so sure of that?

BRENDEL.

There's no room for doubt, my dear fellow. The President has convinced me of it.

ROSMER.

The President?

BRENDEL.

Well well—His Excellency then. *Ganz nach Belieben.*

ROSMER.

Whom do you mean?

BRENDEL.

Peter Mortensgård, of course.

ROSMER.

What?

BRENDEL.

[*Mysteriously.*] Hush, hush, hush! Peter Mortensgård is the lord and leader of the future. Never have I stood in a more august presence. Peter Mortensgård has the secret of omnipotence. He can do whatever he will.

ROSMER.

Oh, don't believe that.

BRENDEL.

Yes, my boy! For Peter Mortensgård never wills more than he can do. Peter Mortensgård is capable of

living his life without ideals. And t h a t, do you see—t h a t is just the mighty secret of action and of victory. It is the sum of the whole world's wisdom. *Basta!*

ROSMER.

[*In a low voice.*] Now I understand—why you leave here poorer than you came.

BRENDEL.

Bien! Then take a *Beispiel* by your ancient teacher. Rub out all that he once imprinted on your mind. Build not thy house on shifting sand. And look ahead—and feel your way—before you build on this exquisite creature, who here lends sweetness to your life.

REBECCA.

Is it me you mean?

BRENDEL.

Yes, my fascinating mermaid.

REBECCA.

Why am I not to be built on?

BRENDEL.

[*Comes a step nearer.*] I gather that my former pupil has a great cause to carry forward to victory.

REBECCA.

What then——?

BRENDEL.

Victory is assured. But—mark me well—on one indispensable condition.

her tender, rosy-white little finge
the middle joint. Item, that t
—again gladly—shall slice off
left ear. [*Lets her go, and*
well, my conquering Johannes

ROSME

Are you going now? In th

BREND

The dark night is best. Pe
[*He goes. There is*

REBEC

[*Breathes heavily.*] Oh, how
[*Goes to the window, open*
by it.

ROSME

[*Sits down in the arm-chai*
nothing else for it after all,
m u s t go away.

REBEC

REBECCA.

[*Goes and sits on the sofa.*] What do you want to say to me, Rosmer?

ROSMER.

First, I want to tell you that you need not feel any anxiety about your future.

REBECCA.

[*Smiles.*] H'm, my future.

ROSMER.

I have long ago arranged for everything. Whatever may happen, you are provided for.

REBECCA.

That too, my dear one?

ROSMER.

You might surely have known that.

REBECCA.

It is many a long day since I have given a thought to such things.

ROSMER.

Yes, yes—you thought things would always remain as they were between us.

REBECCA.

Yes, I thought so.

ROSMER.

So did I. But if I were to go——

REBECCA.

Oh, Rosmer—you will live longer than I.

ROSMER.

Surely my worthless life lies in my own hands.

REBECCA.

What is this? You are never thinking of——?

ROSMER.

Do you think it would be so strange? After this pitiful, lamentable defeat! I, who was to have borne a great cause on to victory—have I not fled from the battle before it was well begun?

REBECCA.

Take up the fight again, Rosmer! Only try—and you shall see, you will conquer. You will ennoble hundreds—thousands of minds. Only try!

ROSMER.

Oh Rebecca—I, who no longer believe in my own mission!

REBECCA.

But your mission has stood the test already. You have ennobled one human being at least—me you have ennobled for the rest of my days.

ROSMER.

Oh—if I dared believe you.

REBECCA.

[*Pressing her hands together.*] Oh Rosmer,—do you know of nothing—nothing that could make you believe it?

ROSMER.

[*Starts as if in fear.*] Don't speak of that! Keep away from that, Rebecca! Not a word more.

REBECCA.

Yes, this is precisely what we m u s t speak about. Do you know of anything that would kill the doubt? For *I* know of nothing in the world.

ROSMER.

It is well for you that you do not know.—It is well for both of us.

REBECCA.

No, no, no.—I will not be put off in this way! If you know of anything that would absolve me in your eyes, I claim as my right to be told of it.

ROSMER.

[*As if impelled against his will to speak.*] Then let us see. You say that a great love is in you; that through me your mind has been ennobled. Is it so? Is your reckoning just, Rebecca? Shall we try to prove the sum? Say?

Ros

Then let me see, Rebecc
very evening—— [*Breaks*

Reb

Yes, Rosmer! Yes! Te

Ros

Have you the courage—l
Ulric Brendel said—for my
the same way that Beata w

Reb

[*Rises slowly from the s*
mer——!

Ros

Yes, Rebecca—that is th
haunt me—when you are g
it will return upon me. Oh

REBECCA.

But if I had the heart to do it? And the will to do it gladly? What then?

ROSMER.

I should have to believe you then. I should recover my faith in my mission. Faith in my power to ennoble human souls. Faith in the human soul's power to attain nobility.

REBECCA.

[*Takes up her shawl slowly, and puts it over her head; says with composure.*] You shall have your faith again.

ROSMER.

Have you the will and the courage—for this, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

That you shall see to-morrow—or afterwards—when they find my body.

ROSMER.

[*Puts his hand to his forehead.*] There is a horrible fascination in this——!

REBECCA.

For I don't want to remain down there. Not longer than necessary. You must see that they find me.

ROSMER.

[*Springs up.*] But all this—is nothing but madness. Go—or stay! I will take your bare word this time too.

REBECCA.

Phrases, Rosmer! Let us have no more cowardly subterfuges, dear! How can you believe me on my bare word after this day?

ROSMER.

I shrink from seeing your defeat, Rebecca!

REBECCA.

It will be no defeat.

ROSMER.

Yes, it will. You will never bring yourself to go Beata's way.

REBECCA.

Do you think not?

ROSMER.

Never! You are not like Beata. You are not under the dominion of a distorted view of life.

REBECCA.

But I am under the dominion of the Rosmersholm view of life—now. What I have sinned—it is fit that I should expiate.

ROSMER.

[*Looks at her fixedly.*] Is that your point of view?

REBECCA.

Yes.

ROSMER.

[*With resolution.*] Well then, *I* stand firm in our emancipated view of life, Rebecca. There is no judge over us; and therefore we must do justice upon ourselves.

REBECCA.

[*Misunderstanding him.*] Yes, that is true—that too. My going away will save what is best in you.

ROSMER.

Oh, there is nothing left to save in me.

REBECCA.

Yes, there is. But I—after to-day, I should only be a sea-troll dragging down the ship that is to carry you forward. I must go overboard. Why should I remain here in the world, trailing after me my own crippled life? Why brood and brood over the happiness that my past has forfeited for ever? I must give up the game, Rosmer.

ROSMER.

If you go—I go with you.

REBECCA.

[*Smiles almost imperceptibly, looks at him, and says more softly.*] Yes, come with me—and see——

ROSMER.

I go with you, I say.

REBECCA.

To the foot-bridge, yes. You know you never dare go out upon it.

ROSMER.

Have you noticed that?

REBECCA.

[*Sadly and brokenly.*] Yes.—It was that that made my love hopeless.

ROSMER.

Rebecca,—now I lay my hand on your head— [*He does so.*]—and I wed you as my true wife.

REBECCA.

[*Takes both his hands, and bows her head towards his breast.*] Thanks, Rosmer. [*Lets him go.*] And now I will go—gladly.

ROSMER.

I am certain that it is the only way.

REBECCA.

If you were deceiving yourself? If it were only a delusion? One of those white horses of Rosmersholm.

ROSMER.

It may be so. For we can never escape from them—we of this house.

REBECCA

Then stay, Rosmer!

ROSMER.

The husband shall go with his wife, as the wife with her husband.

REBECCA.

Yes, but first tell me t h i s: Is it you who follow me? Or is it I who follow you?

ROSMER.

We shall never think that question out.

REBECCA.

But I should like to know.

ROSMER.

We go with each other, Rebecca—I with you, and you with me.

For now we two are

F

Yes. We are one. C
[*They go out hand i*
seen to turn to the
[*The room stands e*
door to the right i

MAD

Miss West—the carri
here? Out together at t
say——! H'm! [*Goes*
comes in again.] Not o
[*Goes to the window an*
white thing there—
them out on the bridg
tures—if they're not
aloud.] Oh—down—l
race! Help! Help!
the chair-back. shakin
words out.] No. No
taken them.

THE LADY FROM THE SEA

THE LADY FROM THE SEA

INTRODUCTION *

IBSEN'S birthplace, Skien, is not on the sea, but at the head of a long and very narrow fiord. At Grimstad, however, and again at Bergen, he had for years lived close to the skerry-bound coast. After he left Bergen, he seldom came in touch with the open sea. The upper part of Christiania Fiord is a mere salt-water lake; and in Germany he never saw the sea, in Italy only on brief visits to Ischia, Sorrento, Amalfi. We find him in 1880,[1] writing to Hegel from Munich: "Of all that I miss down here, I miss the sea most. That is the deprivation to which I can least reconcile myself." Again, in 1885, before the visit which he paid that year to Norway, he writes from Rome to the same correspondent, that he has visions of buying a country-house by the sea, in the neighbourhood of Christiania. "The sight of the sea," he says, "is what I most miss in these regions; and this feeling grows year by year." During the weeks he spent at Molde that year, there can be no doubt that he was gathering, not only the political impressions which he used in *Rosmersholm*, but the impressions of ocean and fiord, and of the tide of European life flowing past, but not mingling

[1] The date is July 16. On March 5 of the same year he had (as we shall see later) written down the first outline of what was afterwards to become *The Lady from the Sea*.

* Copyright, 1907, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

with, the "carp-pond" existence of a small Norwegian town, which he was afterwards to embody in *The Lady from the Sea*. That invaluable bibliographer, Halvorsen, is almost certainly wrong in suggesting that Veblungsnæs, at the head of the Romsdalfiord, is the scene of the play. The "local situation" is much more like that of Molde itself. There Ibsen must frequently have seen the great English tourist steamer gliding noiselessly to its moorings, before proceeding up the fiord to Veblungsnæs, and then, on the following day, slipping out to sea again.

Two years later, in 1887, Ibsen spent the summer at Frederikshavn and at Sæby in the north of Jutland, not far from the Skaw. At Sæby I visited him; and from a letter written at the time I make the following extract: "He said that Fru Ibsen and he had just come from Frederikshavn, which he himself liked very much—he could knock about all day among the shipping, talking to the sailors, and so forth. Besides, he found the neighbourhood of the sea favourable to contemplation and constructive thought. Here, at Sæby, the sea was not so easily accessible. But Fru Ibsen didn't like Frederikshavn because of the absence of pleasant walks about it; so Sæby was a sort of compromise between him and her." I remember that he enlarged to me at great length on the fascination which the sea exercised over him. He was then, he said, "preparing some tomfoolery for next year." On his return to Munich, he put his ideas into shape, and *The Lady from the Sea* was published in November, 1888.

Ibsen wrote few letters while the play was in process of preparation, and none of them contains any note-

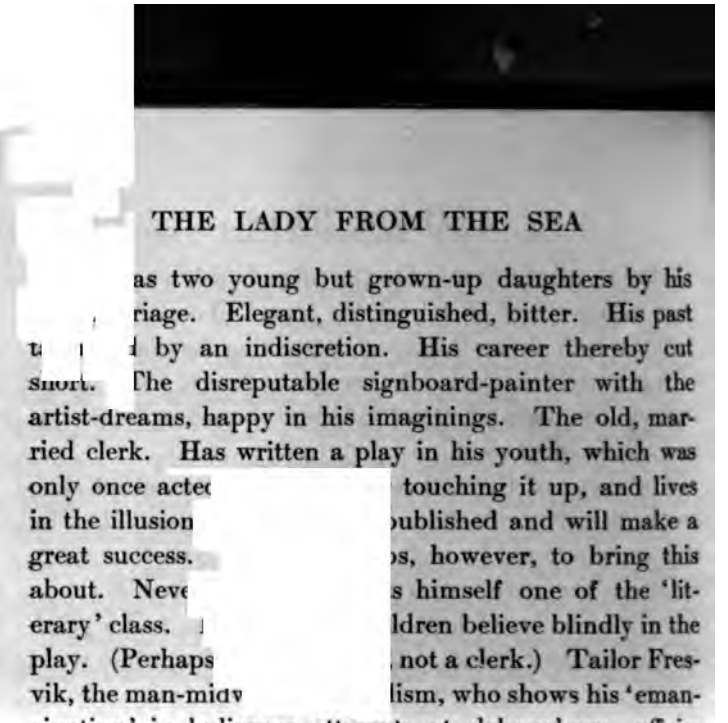
worthy reference to it. On the other hand, we possess a very curious first sketch of the story[1] (dated March 5, 1880), which shows in a most interesting fashion how an idea grew in his mind. Abbreviating freely, I will try to indicate the main points of difference between the sketch and the finished play.

The scene of the action was originally conceived as a much smaller town than it ultimately became, shut in and overshadowed by high, abrupt rocks. (Note that when he wrote the sketch Ibsen had not yet visited Molde). There was to be an hotel and a sanatorium, and a good deal of summer gaiety in the place; but the people were to long, in an impotent, will-less fashion, for release from their imprisonment in the "shadow-life" of this remote corner of the world. Through the short summer, they were always to have the long winter impending over them; and this was to be a type of life: "A bright summer day with the great darkness after it—that is all." This motive, though traces of it remain, is much less emphasised than was at first intended.

The characters were to fall into three groups: inhabitants of the town, summer visitors, and passing tourists. The tourists were simply to "come and go, and enter episodically into the action"; but the other two groups are more or less individualised.

The first group is thus described: "The lawyer married, a second time, to the woman from the open sea out-

[1] Published in *Die neue Rundschau*, December, 1906. The *Literary Remains* contain, besides this sketch, a first draft of the play, somewhat fragmentary, yet covering nearly the whole ground, and showing that it underwent no essential remodelling in the course of revision.



as two young but grown-up daughters by his riage. Elegant, distinguished, bitter. His past t[illegible] by an indiscretion. His career thereby cut short. The disreputable signboard-painter with the artist-dreams, happy in his imaginings. The old, married clerk. Has written a play in his youth, which was only once acte[illegible] touching it up, and lives in the illusion [illegible] published and will make a great success. [illegible]s, however, to bring this about. Neve[illegible]s himself one of the 'literary' class. [illegible]ldren believe blindly in the play. (Perhaps [illegible] not a clerk.) Tailor Fresvik, the man-midv[illegible]lism, who shows his 'emancipation' in ludicrous attempts at debauchery—affairs with other men's wives—talks of divorce and so forth."

We see that, in the course of elaboration, not only the profession, but the character of Wangel was entirely altered. It is noteworthy, by the way, that, with Ibsen, lawyers are always more or less unsympathetic characters (Stensgård, Helmer, Krogstad, Brack) while doctors are more or less sympathetic (Fieldbo, Rank, Stockmann, Relling, Wangel, Herdal). We see, too, how he saved up for seventeen years the character of the clerk-dramatist. Found superfluous in *The Lady from the Sea*, he became the delightful Foldal of *John Gabriel Borkman*. The radical tailor was destined never to come to life; and the

[1] I met in Rome, in 1881–82, when Ibsen was living there, a minor official of the Vatican Library, then a middle-aged man, who had written eighteen or twenty tragedies, all of which I saw in exquisite manuscript. One of them, *Coriolano*, had been acted once, on the day, I think, before the Italian troops entered Rome in 1870. Is it possible that Ibsen, too, had come across this rival dramatist?

characteristics of the "signboard-painter" were divided between Ballested and Lyngstrand.

In the second group, however—that of the summer visitors—the consumptive sculptor Lyngstrand is already pretty completely sketched. The group was also to have included Lyngstrand's "patron" and his patron's wife —a "stupid, uppish, and tactless woman, who wounds the patient sometimes without meaning it, sometimes on purpose." The patron's wife has entirely disappeared from the completed play, while the patron, though mentioned, has not even a name.

But the oddest fact which this sketch brings to light is that Arnholm and the Stranger were formed by the scission, so to speak, of one character, denominated the "Strange Passenger." Ellida[1] was originally to have been a pastor's daughter. She was to have engaged herself secretly to a "young and unprincipled mate"—a midshipman dismissed the navy. This engagement she broke off, partly at her father's command, partly of her own free will, because she could not forgive what she had learnt of the young sailor's past. Then, after her marriage, she came to feel that in her ignorance and prejudice she had been too hard on him, and to believe that "essentially—in her imagination—it was with him that she had led her married life." This is very like the feeling of Ellida in the play; but her story has become much

[1] The name originally assigned her was "Thora." Readers who know anything of Norway will probably realise how absolutely right was the substitution of "Ellida." It is a master-stroke in the art of nomenclature. Boletta was originally called Thea, and afterwards Annette. Hilda first appears under the name of Frida. Arnholm is at first Hesler, and afterwards Arenholdt.

more strange and romantic. It is not quite clear—the sketch being incomplete—whether the ex-midshipman was to have appeared in person. But there was to have been a "Strange Passenger" (so nicknamed by the other summer visitors) who had been in love with Ellida in the old days, and of whom she was now to make a confidant, very much as she does of Arnholm in the play. His character, however, was to have been quite unlike that of Arnholm; he was to have been "bitter, and given to cutting jests"—somewhat reminiscent, in fact, of the Strange Passenger in *Peer Gynt*. Ibsen may have meant that the nickname should be given him in allusion to that figure. We see, at any rate, that the Strange Passenger, in his capacity as Ellida's confidant, became Arnholm, who is not in the least strange; while the strangeness was transferred to Ellida's former lover, who, originally conceived as a comparatively commonplace personage, now became distinctively "the Stranger."

Fragments of dialogue are roughly sketched—especially the young sculptor's story of the shipwreck and of the group it has suggested to him. Ellida's fancy that mankind has taken a wrong turning in developing into land-animals instead of water-animals is rather more carefully worked out in the sketch than in the play. It takes the form of a semi-serious biological theory, not attributed to any particular character: "Why should we belong to the dry land? Why not to the air? Why not to the sea? The common longing for wings—the strange dreams that one can fly and that one does fly without feeling the least surprise at the fact—how is all this to be explained?" The suggestion evidently is that these dreams

are reminiscences of the bird stage in our development; and then the poet goes on to suggest the same explanation of the intense longing for the sea which he attributes to Ellida: "People who are akin to the sea. Bound to the sea. Dependent on the sea. Must get back to it. A fish-species forms the primordial link in the evolutionary chain. Do rudiments of it survive in our nature? In the nature of some of us?" He also indicates a fantasy of floating cities to be towed southwards or northwards according to the season. "To learn to control storms and the weather. Some such glorious time will come. And we—we shall not be there to see it." All this over-luxuriant growth of fantasy has been carefully pruned in the completed play.

The main incidents of the first act are sketched out in a form not very different from that which they ultimately assumed—and there the scenario breaks off.

"The Stranger's dæmonic power over Ellida was suggested," says John Paulsen, "by Welhaven's strange influence over Camilla Wergeland;" while Dr. Brahm asserts "on credible authority" that the incident of the rings thrown into the sea reproduces an episode of Ibsen's own early life in Bergen. Until the "credible authority" is more clearly specified, we need not pin our faith to the latter assertion; but the former receives some confirmation in a letter which Ibsen addressed on May 3, 1889, to the lady whom Paulsen mentions. This was Camilla Collett, born Wergeland, a sister of the great lyric poet, Henrik Wergeland, and the authoress of a book, *From the Camp of the Dumb* (1877) which is said to have greatly influenced Ibsen's attitude towards the woman-

composition of [illegible]
wrote: "Allow me to sen
cere thanks for your comp
Sea. I felt pretty sure ir
than any one else I could
but it gave me inexpressib
firmed by your letter. Y
blance—indeed many. A
—points, I mean, which I
tion. But it is now mai
your spiritual developme
other, to make your pres
Collett died in 1895, at t

Nowhere has *The La*
Ibsen's most popular w
Scandinavian capitals, a
February and March, 18
ent at the first performa
lin, on March 4, and afte
ance at Weimar, where
after each act, and recei
to Hoffory, he expressed

play holds the stage here and there in Germany, but is not very frequently acted.

In London, five performances of Mrs. Marx-Aveling's translation were given, under the direction of Dr. Aveling, at Terry's Theatre in May, 1891—the year of the first performance in England of *Ghosts*, *Rosmersholm*, and *Hedda Gabler*. This wholly inadequate production was followed, eleven years later, by a revival at the Royalty Theatre, by the Stage Society, in which Ellida was played by Miss Janet Achurch, and the Stranger by Mr. Laurence Irving. In Paris, an organisation calling itself "Les Escholiers," produced *La Dame de la Mer* in 1892. It was afterwards played, both in Paris and on tour, by the Théâtre de l'Œuvre.

The discovery that *The Lady from the Sea* was planned so early as 1880 is particularly interesting in view of the fact that, in technical concentration, and even, one is inclined to say, in intellectual power, it falls notably below the level of its immediate predecessors, *The Wild Duck* and *Rosmersholm*, and its immediate successors, *Hedda Gabler* and *The Master Builder*. It would scarcely be going too far to call it the weakest thing Ibsen produced between *A Doll's House* and *John Gabriel Borkman*, both inclusive. I well remember the sense of slackening dramatic fibre with which I read it on its first appearance; the fear that age was beginning to tell upon the poet; and the relief with which I found him, in *Hedda Gabler*, once more at the very height of his power. Some readers may take exception to this view, and declare that they prefer *The Lady from the Sea* to several of the plays which I would rank above it. In point of amenity and charm, it

doubtless ranks high among Ibsen's works; its poetic merits are great; but the comparative laxity of its technique seems to me quite unmistakable. The main interest—the Ellida-Wangel interest, let us call it—is constantly being interrupted by two subsidiary interests: the Arnholm-Boletta interest, and the Boletta-Hilda-Lyngstrand interest. These lines of interest touch each other, but are not effectually interwoven. In no other play of Ibsen's, in fact, since *The League of Youth*, is there such a marked sub-plot, or, rather, two sub-plots; and, for my part, judging them by the high Ibsen standard, I find neither of these sub-plots particularly interesting. The main action, on the other hand, is not only interesting but full of psychological truth. Ellida is one of the most living of Ibsen's women. There are few of his heroines whom one has not seen and recognised in real life; but Ellida in particular I happen to have known intimately, though Ibsen never heard of the lady in question. The character of Wangel, too, is not only very amiable, but very closely observed. Yet even in the working out of this main theme, there is, I think, a technical weakness. We feel that, in the decisive scene of the last act, Wangel's mere statement that he sets Ellida free is an insufficient pivot for the revolution which takes place in her mind. Psychologically, no doubt, it is adequate, but dramatically it is ineffective. The poet ought, I suggest, to have devised some more convincing means of bringing home both to her and to us the fact of her manumission.[1]

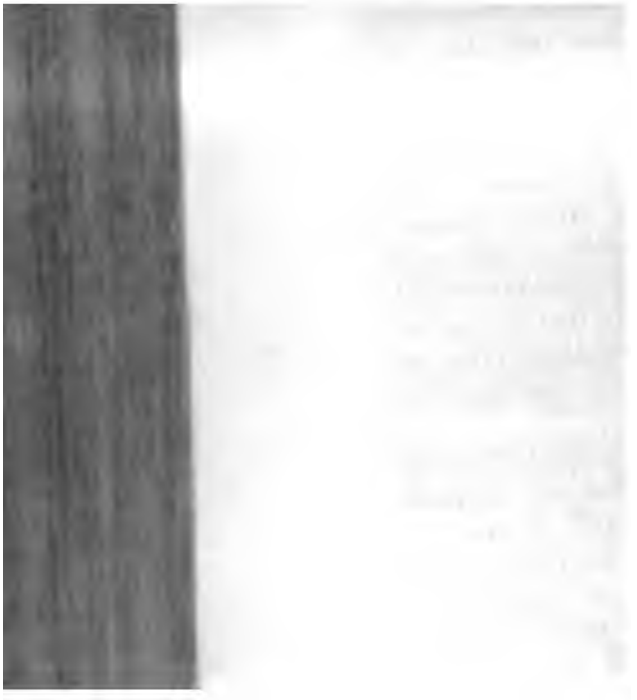
[1] In the draft, Wangel says at the decisive moment: "It would be easy for me to prevent you from going away with this strange man. I do nothing to prevent you. You are now a free woman, at full liberty to go where you will."

In default of a practical proof, a symbolic indication might have served; but something we want beyond a mere verbal declaration. It may be taken as a technical principle, I believe, that a change of mind on which so much depends ought, for purposes of dramatic effect, to be demonstrated by some outward and visible sign sufficiently cogent to make the audience fully realise and believe in it.

Another technical weakness, more obvious, though perhaps less important, is the astounding coincidence by which Lyngstrand, the one witness to the Stranger's frenzy on reading of Ellida's faithlessness, is made, by pure chance, to encounter Ellida and to tell her the story. This is, I think, the only real abuse of coincidence in Ibsen's modern plays, from *Pillars of Society* onwards.[1] One or two other much slighter coincidences—such as, in *A Doll's House*, Mrs. Linden's former acquaintance with Krogstad—are accounted for by the fact that Norway is a very small country, in which, roughly speaking, every one of the town-dwelling upper and middle class knows, or has heard of, every one else.

As I have pointed out in the introduction to *Rosmersholm*, *The Lady from the Sea* is the first play in which Ibsen entirely abandons social satire and devotes himself to pure psychology. It is also the first play in which he trenches on the occult. He was to go much further in this direction in *The Master Builder* and *Little Eyolf;* but already he pursues the plan, which was also Hawthorne's, of carefully leaving us in doubt as to whether,

[1] It is suggested that the coincidence is to be regarded as part of the "occult" atmosphere of the play. But I doubt whether this was in the poet's mind; and, in any case, the defence does not seem a very good one.



THE LADY FROM THE SEA

(1888)

DOCTOR WANGEL,[1] *district*
ELLIDA[2] WANGEL, *his sec*
BOLETTA } *his*
HILDA, *a young girl* } *j*
ARNHOLM, *a schoolmaster.*
LYNGSTRAND.
BALLESTED.[3]
A STRANGER.
Young Townspeople.
Tourists, etc.

The action takes place in the summ
a fiord in Northe

[1] Pronounce *Vangl.*
[2] Pronounce *El-lee-da*, with accer
[3] Pronounce *Bal-le-staid.*

THE LADY FROM THE SEA

PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

ACT FIRST

OCTOR WANGEL'S *house, with a large veranda, on the left. Garden in front and around. Near the veranda, a flag-staff. To the right, in the garden, an arbour, with table and chairs. At the back, a hedge, with a small gate. Beyond the hedge, a road along the shore, shaded by trees on either side. Between the trees there is a view of the fiord, with high mountain ranges and peaks in the distance. It is a warm and brilliantly clear summer morning.*

ALLESTED, *a middle-aged man, dressed in an old velvet jacket and broad-brimmed artist's hat, stands at the foot of the flag-staff, arranging the cord. The flag is lying on the ground. A little way off stands an easel with a stretched canvas. Beside it, on a camp-stool, are brushes, palette, and a paint-box.*

OLETTA WANGEL *comes out upon the veranda through the open garden-room door. She is carrying a large vase of flowers, which she places upon the table.*

BOLETTA.

Well, Ballested,—can you get it to run?

BALLESTED.

Oh yes, Miss Boletta. It's easy enough.—May I ask you are expecting visitors to-day?

BOLETTA.

Yes, we expect Mr. Arnholm this morning. He came to town last night.

BALLESTED.

Arnholm? Wait a moment—wasn't Arnholm the name of the tutor you had here some years ago?

BOLETTA.

Yes; it is he that is coming.

BALLESTED.

Ah, indeed. So he is in these parts again?

BOLETTA.

That is why we want the flag run up.

BALLESTED.

fast, and begins to busy himself at the easel.] I take off my hat to you, sir—though I don't think I have the pleasure——

LYNGSTRAND.

You are a painter, are you not?

BALLESTED.

Yes, certainly. Why should I not be a painter?

LYNGSTRAND.

Ah, I can see you are.—Should you mind my coming in for a moment?

BALLESTED.

Do you want to have a look at it?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I should like to extremely.

BALLESTED.

Oh there's nothing much to see as yet. But pray come in—you're quite welcome.

LYNGSTRAND.

Many thanks. [*He comes in through the garden gate.*

BALLESTED.

[*Painting.*] It's the inner part of the fiord, among the islands, that I am working at.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I see.

BALLESTED.

But I haven't put in the figure yet. There is no such thing as a model to be had in the town.

LYNGSTRAND.

There is to be a figure, is there?

BALLESTED.

Yes. By the rock in the foreground here, I mean to have a half-dead mermaid lying.

LYNGSTRAND.

Why half-dead?

BALLESTED.

She has strayed in from the sea, and can't find her way out again. So she lies here dying by inches in the brackish waters, you understand.

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh, that is the idea?

BALLESTED.

It was the lady of this house that suggested it to me.

LYNGSTRAND.

What will you call the picture when it is finished?

BALLESTED.

I think of calling it "The Mermaid's End."

LYNGSTRAND.

Capital.—You are sure to make something good out of this.

BALLESTED.

[*Looking at him.*] An artist yourself, perhaps?

LYNGSTRAND.

A painter, you mean?

BALLESTED.

Yes.

LYNGSTRAND.

No, I am not. But I am going to be a sculptor. My name is Hans Lyngstrand.

BALLESTED.

Going to be a sculptor, are you? Well, well, sculpture, too, is a fine, gentleman-like art.—I fancy I've seen you in the street once or twice. Have you been staying here long?

LYNGSTRAND.

No, I have only been here a fortnight. But I hope I may be able to stay the whole summer.

BALLESTED.

To enjoy the gaieties of the season, eh?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, rather to get up my strength a bit.

BALLESTED.

Not an invalid, I hope?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, I'm what you might call a little bit of an invalid. Nothing to speak of, you know. It's only a sort of short-windedness in my chest.

BALLESTED.

Pooh—a mere trifle. Still, I would consult a good doctor, if I were you.

LYNGSTRAND.

I thought, if I could find an opportunity, I might speak to Dr. Wangel.

BALLESTED.

Yes, do. [*Looks out to the left.*] Here comes another steamer. Chock full of passengers. It's extraordinary how the tourist business has increased here during the last few years.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, there seems to be a continual coming and going.

BALLESTED.

The place is full of summer visitors too. I'm sometimes afraid that our good town may lose its character with all this foreign invasion.

LYNGSTRAND.

Are you a native of the place?

BALLESTED.

No, I am not. But I have accla—acclimatised myself. I have become attached to the place by the bonds of time and habit.

LYNGSTRAND.

You have lived here a long time, then?

BALLESTED.

Well, seventeen or eighteen years. I came here with Skive's[1] dramatic company. But we got into financial difficulties; so the company broke up and was scattered to the winds.

LYNGSTRAND.

But you remained?

BALLESTED.

I remained. And I have had no cause to regret it. You see in those days I was mainly employed as a scene-painter.

BOLETTA *comes out with a rocking-chair, which she places in the veranda.*

BOLETTA.

[*Speaking into the garden-room.*] Hilda,—see if you can find the embroidered footstool for father.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Approaches the veranda and bows.*] Good morning, Miss Wangel.

[1] Pronounce *Sheevé's.*

Do you know the fami

Ly

Very slightly. I have
twice at other houses. A
Wangel the last time the
She said I might come a

B

I'll tell you what,—y
quaintance.

Ly

Yes, I've been thinkin
calling on them, you k
pretext——

B

Oh nonsense,—a pre
Confound it all! [*Coll*
alongside the pier alrea
Perhaps some of the n

BALLESTED.

One must know how to ac—climatise oneself to various professions in these small places. If you should ever require anything in the hair line—pomade or what not—you have only to ask for Dancing-Master Ballested.

LYNGSTRAND.

Dancing-Master——

BALLESTED.

President of the Musical Society, if you prefer it. We give a concert up at the Prospect this evening. Good-bye, good-bye.

[He goes with his painting materials through the garden gate, and then out to the left.

HILDA *comes out with the stool.* BOLETTA *brings more flowers.* LYNGSTRAND *bows to* HILDA *from the garden.*

HILDA.

[By the balustrade, without returning the bow.] Boletta said you had ventured in to-day.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I took the liberty of coming into the garden.

HILDA.

Have you been out for your morning walk?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, no,—I haven't had much of a walk to-day.

HILDA.

Have you been bathing then?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I had a little dip. I saw your mother down there. She was just going into her bathing-house.

HILDA.

Who was?

LYNGSTRAND.

Your mother.

HILDA.

Oh indeed.

[*She places the stool in front of the rocking-chair.*

BOLETTA.

[*As if to change the subject.*] Did you see anything of my father's boat out on the fiord?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I saw a sailing-boat that seemed to be standing inwards.

BOLETTA.

That must have been father. He has been out visiting patients on the islands.

[*She arranges things about the table.*

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Standing on the lowest of the veranda steps.*] Why, what a splendid show of flowers you have here——!

BOLETTA.

Yes, doesn't it look nice?

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh, charming. It looks as if the day were some family festival.

HILDA.

So it is.

LYNGSTRAND.

I guessed as much. Your father's birthday, I suppose?

BOLETTA.

[*Warningly to* HILDA.] H'm,—h'm!

HILDA.

[*Not heeding her.*] No, mother's

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh indeed,—your mother's, is it?

BOLETTA.

[*In a low, angry tone.*] Now, Hilda——!

HILDA.

[*In the same tone.*] Let me alone! [*To* LYNGSTRAND.] I suppose you're going home to lunch now?

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Descending from the step.*] Yes, I suppose I must see about getting something to eat.

I am not staying [illegible]
sive for me.

HILD

Where are you now, then?

LYNGST

I have a room at Madam J

HILD

Which Madam Jensen's?

LYNGST

The midwife's.

HIL

Excuse me, Mr. Lyngstra
to——

LYNGS

Oh, I suppose I oughtn't

HI

HILDA.

[*Looks at him witheringly from top to toe.*] I don't in the least understand you.

LYNGSTRAND.

No, no. Well, I must bid you good-bye for the present, ladies.

BOLETTA.

[*Comes forward to the steps.*] Good-bye, good-bye, Mr. Lyngstrand. You must please excuse us for to-day.—But another time, when you have nothing better to do—and when you feel inclined,—I hope you'll look in and see father and—and the rest of us.

LYNGSTRAND.

Many thanks. I shall be only too delighted.

[*He bows and goes out by the garden gate. As he passes along the road outside, to the left, he bows again towards the veranda.*

HILDA.

[*Under her breath.*] Adieu, Mossyoo! My love to Mother Jensen.

BOLETTA.

[*Softly, shakes her by the arm.*] Hilda——! You naughty child! Are you mad? He might easily hear you!

HILDA.

Pooh,—do you think I care?

BOLETTA.

[*Looks out to the right.*] Here comes father.

DOCTOR WANGEL, *in travelling dress, and carrying a hand-bag, comes along the foot-path from the right.*

WANGEL.

Well, here I am again, little girls!

[*He comes in through the gate.*

BOLETTA.

[*Goes down to meet him in the garden.*] Oh, I'm so glad you have come.

HILDA.

[*Also going down to him.*] Have you finished for the day now, father?

WANGEL.

WANGEL.

Yes, of course he will.

HILDA.

[*Drawing him round.*] Father you must look about you now.

WANGEL.

[*Looking towards the veranda.*] Yes, yes, my child, I see.—There is quite an air of festivity about the place.

BOLETTA.

Don't you think we have arranged it prettily?

WANGEL.

Yes, you have indeed—Is—are we alone in the house?

HILDA.

Yes, she has gone to——

BOLETTA.

[*Interrupts quickly.*] Mother is bathing.

WANGEL.

[*Looks kindly at* BOLETTA *and pats her head. Then he says, with some hesitation:*] Look here, little girls—do you intend to keep up this display all day? And the flag flying too?

HILDA.

Why, of course we do, father!

WANGEL.

H'm—yes. But you see——

BOLETTA.

[*Nodding and smiling to him.*] Of course you understand that it's all in honour of Mr. Arnholm. When such an old friend comes to pay his first visit to you——

HILDA.

[*Smiling and shaking him.*] Remember—wasn't he Boletta's tutor, father?

WANGEL.

[*Half smiling.*] You are a pair of young rogues.—Well well,—after all, it's only natural that we should remember her who is no longer among us. But all the same——. Look here, Hilda. [*Gives her his hand-bag.*] This must go down to the surgery.—No, little girls.—I don't like all this—the manner of it, I mean. That we should make a practice every year of——. Well, what can one say? I suppose there is no other way of doing it.

HILDA.

[*Is about to go through the garden to the left with the hand-bag, but stops, turns, and points.*] Look at that gentleman coming along the road. I believe it's Mr. Arnholm.

BOLETTA.

[*Looks in the same direction.*] He! [*Laughs.*] What an absurd idea! To take that middle-aged man for Mr. Arnholm.

WANGEL.

Wait a bit, child. Upon my life, I believe it's he!—Yes, I am sure of it!

BOLETTA.

[*Gazing fixedly, in quiet astonishment.*] Yes, I do believe it is!

ARNHOLM, *in elegant morning dress, with gold spectacles and a light cane, appears on the road, coming from the left. He looks somewhat overworked. On seeing the party in the garden, he bows in a friendly way, and comes through the gate.*

WANGEL.

[*Going to meet him.*] Welcome my dear Arnholm! Heartily welcome to your old haunts again.

ARNHOLM.

Thank you, thank you, Doctor Wangel. A thousand thanks. [*They shake hands and cross the garden together.*] And here are the children! [*Holds out his hands to them and looks at them.*] These two I should scarcely have known again.

WANGEL.

No, I daresay not.

ARNHOLM.

Oh well,—perhaps Boletta.—Yes, I should have known Boletta.

WANGEL.

Scarcely, I think. Let me see, it's eight or nine years since you saw her last. Ah yes, there has been many a change here since then.

ARNHOLM.

[*Looking about him.*] I should hardly say so. Except that the trees have grown a bit—and you have planted a new arbour there——

WANGEL.

Oh no, outwardly I daresay.

ARNHOLM.

[*Smiles.*] And now, of course, you have two grown-up daughters in the house.

WANGEL.

Oh, only one grown-up, surely.

HILDA.

[*Half-aloud.*] Just listen to father!

WANGEL.

BOLETTA.

[*To* WANGEL.] Shall we bring a little soda-water and syrup into the garden-room? It will soon be too warm out here.

WANGEL.

Yes do, little girls. Soda-water and syrup. And perhaps a little cognac.

BOLETTA.

Cognac too?

WANGEL.

Just a little. In case any one should care for it.

BOLETTA.

Very well. Hilda, will you take the hand-bag down to the surgery?

BOLETTA *goes into the garden-room and closes the door after her.* HILDA *takes the bag and, going through the garden, disappears behind the house to the left.*

ARNHOLM.

[*Who has been following* BOLETTA *with his eyes.*] What a splendid girl—what splendid girls they have grown into!

WANGEL.

[*Seats himself.*] Yes, don't you think so?

ARNHOLM.

Boletta quite astonishes me—and Hilda too, for that matter.—But you yourself, my dear Doctor—do you intend to remain here for the rest of your days?

WANGEL.

Oh yes, that's what it will come to, I suppose. I was born and bred here, you see. Here I lived very very happily with her who was so early taken from us—with her whom you knew when you were here before, Arnholm.

ARNHOLM.

Yes—yes.

WANGEL.

And now I live here so happily with one who has come to me in her stead. I must say that, take it all in all, the fates have been kind to me.

ARNHOLM.

You have no children by your second marriage?

WANGEL.

We had a little boy, two or two and a half years ago. But we did not keep him long. He died when he was four or five months old.

ARNHOLM.

Is your wife not at home to-day?

WANGEL.

Oh yes, she'll be here very soon. She has gone to bathe. She never misses a day at this season; no matter what the weather may be.

ARNHOLM.

Is she out of health?

WANGEL.

No, not exactly; but she has been curiously nervous the last couple of years or so—off and on, you know. I can't quite make out what is wrong with her. But to get into the sea is life and happiness to her.

ARNHOLM.

I remember that of old.

WANGEL.

[*With an almost imperceptible smile.*] Yes, to be sure, you knew Ellida when you were tutor out at Skioldvik.[1]

ARNHOLM.

Of course. She often visited at the parsonage. And I used generally to see her when I went to the lighthouse to have a talk with her father.

WANGEL.

Her life out there has left a deep impression upon her, as you may imagine. In town here people can't understand it at all. They call her "the lady from the sea."

ARNHOLM.

Do they?

WANGEL.

Yes. And look here—speak to her about the old days, my dear Arnholm. I am sure it will do her good.

[1] Pronounce *Sholdveek*.

ARNHOLM.

[*Looking doubtfully at him.*] Have you any particular reason to think so?

WANGEL.

Yes, certainly I have.

ELLIDA'S VOICE.

[*Heard without, in the garden to the right.*] Are you there, Wangel?

WANGEL.

[*Rising.*] Yes, dear.

MRS. WANGEL *with a large light cloak round her, and with wet hair hanging loose over her shoulders, comes from among the trees beside the arbour.* ARNHOLM *rises.*

WANGEL.

[*Smiling and stretching out his hands towards her.*] Ah, here comes the mermaid!

ELLIDA.

[*Hastens up to the veranda and seizes his hands.*] Thank heaven, you're safe home again! When did you come?

WANGEL.

Just now—a few moments ago. [*Points to* ARNHOLM.] But have you nothing to say to an old acquaintance——?

ELLIDA.

[*Holds out her hand to* ARNHOLM.] So you have really come then? Welcome! And forgive my not being at home——

ARNHOLM.

Oh, don't mention it. Pray don't stand on ceremony——

WANGEL.

Was the water nice and cool to-day?

ELLIDA.

Cool! Why, the water never is cool here—so tepid and flat. Pah! the water is sickly in here in the fiords.

ARNHOLM.

Sickly?

ELLIDA.

Yes, sickly. And I believe it makes one sickly too.

WANGEL.

[*Smiling.*] A nice testimonial for a sea-bathing place.

ARNHOLM.

I should rather say that you, Mrs. Wangel, stand in a peculiar relation to the sea and all that belongs to it.

ELLIDA.

Well, you may be right. I almost think so myself. But do you see how the girls have been decorating the place in your honour?

WANGEL.

[*Embarrassed.*] H'm. [*Looks at his watch.*] I'm afraid I must be going——

ARNHOLM.

Is it really in my honour?

ELLIDA.

Why, of course it is. We're not so fine as this every day. Pah! How suffocatingly hot it is under this roof! [*Goes down into the garden.*] Come over here! Here there's a breath of air to be had at any rate.

[*She seats herself in the arbour.*

ARNHOLM.

[*Goes to her.*] Now I should say the air was distinctly fresh here.

ELLIDA.

Yes, you are used to the close air of Christiania. I'm told it is perfectly dreadful there in summer.

WANGEL.

Ah yes—I'm sure of that. Well, good-bye for the present then?

[*He goes out through the garden to the left.*

ELLIDA.

[*After a short silence.*] Don't you think it is nice sitting here?

ARNHOLM.

I think it is very nice.

ELLIDA.

This is called my summer-house; for it was I that had it built. Or rather Wangel—to please me.

ARNHOLM.

And you sit here a good deal?

ELLIDA.

Yes, I pass most of the day here.

ARNHOLM.

With the girls, I suppose.

ELLIDA.

No, the girls—they keep to the veranda.

ARNHOLM.

And Wangel?

ELLIDA.

Oh, Wangel goes to and fro. Sometimes he is here with me, and sometimes over there with the children.

ARNHOLM.

Is it you that have arranged things so?

ELLIDA.

I think it's the arrangement that suits us all best. We can speak across to each other now and again—whenever we happen to have anything to say.

ARNHOLM.

[*After a reflective pause.*] When last I crossed your path—out at Skioldvik, I mean——. H'm—that's a long time ago——

ELLIDA.

It is a good ten years since you were out there with us.

ARNHOLM.

Yes, about that. But when I remember you out at the lighthouse——! "The heathen," as the old pastor used to call you, because he said your father had had you christened with the name of a ship and not of a Christian——

ELLIDA.

Well, what then?

ARNHOLM.

The last thing I should have expected was to meet you again, here, as Mrs. Wangel.

ELLIDA.

No, at that time Wangel was not yet a—— The girls' first mother was living then—their own mother, I mean——

ARNHOLM.

Of course, of course. But even if it had not been so—even if he had had no ties—I should never have expected this to come to pass.

ELLIDA.

Nor I. Never in this world—at that time.

ARNHOLM.

Wangel is such a fine fellow; so upright, so genuinely good-hearted, and kind to every one——

ELLIDA.

[*Warmly and cordially.*] Yes, indeed he is!

ARNHOLM.

——but he must be so utterly different from you, I should think.

ELLIDA.

You are right there too; we a r e different.

ARNHOLM.

Well then, how did it come about? How was it?

your husband anything abo
about the unsuccessful ste
enough to take.

ELI

No. How can you think
a word to him—about wha

ARN

I am glad of that. I fe
thought that——

EI

You need not at all.
true—that I liked you ver
truest and best friend I ha

AE

Thank you for that. I
never written to me since

ARNHOLM.

H'm—— Well, well, I daresay you were right.

ELLIDA.

But why did y o u never write?

ARNHOLM.

[*Looks at her and smiles half reproachfully.*] I? I begin? And perhaps be suspected of wishing to reopen the attack? After meeting with such a rebuff?

ELLIDA.

Oh no, I can understand that too.—Have you never thought of forming some other tie?

ARNHOLM.

Never. I have remained faithful to my memories.

ELLIDA.

[*Half-joking.*] Oh, nonsense! Let those sad old memories go. I am sure you had much better think about getting happily married.

ARNHOLM.

Then I have no time to lose, Mrs. Wangel. Remember—I blush to say it—I shall never see seven-and-thirty again.

ELLIDA.

Well then, all the more reason to make haste. [*Is silent for a moment, then says earnestly and in a low tone.*] But listen now, my dear Arnholm,—I am going to tell

did.

ARN

I know that. You had n
me. I quite understand th

EL

But you do not know th
thoughts were centred else

ARN

At that time?

EL

Yes, just then.

ARN

But that is impossible!
I don't believe you knew V

EL

It is not Wangel that I

ARN

ELLIDA.

No, no,—I daresay not. For the whole thing was such utter madness.

ARNHOLM.

Do tell me more about this!

ELLIDA.

Oh, it is enough for you to know that I was not free at that time. And now you d o know it.

ARNHOLM.

And if you h a d been free at that time?

ELLIDA.

What then?

ARNHOLM.

Would your answer to my letter have been different?

ELLIDA.

How can I tell? When Wangel came, my answer was different.

ARNHOLM.

Then what is the use of telling me that you were not free?

ELLIDA.

[*Rises, as if in distress and agitation.*] Because I must have some one I can speak to about it. No, no, don't rise.

ARNHOLM.

Your husband, then, knows nothing of the matter?

ELLIDA.

I told him from the first that my thoughts had once been drawn elsewhere. He has never wanted to know more. We have never touched upon the subject since. After all, it was nothing but a piece of madness; and then it all came to an end so quickly. At least,—in a way.

ARNHOLM.

[*Rising.*] Only in a way? Not entirely?

ELLIDA.

Oh yes, of course! My dear good Arnholm, it is not at all as you suppose. It's something quite incomprehensible. I don't think I could find words to tell you of it. You would only think I was ill—or else that I was stark mad.

ARNHOLM.

My dear Mrs. Wangel—now you must and shall tell me the whole story.

ELLIDA.

Well then—I suppose I must try. How should you, with your common sense, ever be able to understand that—— [*Looks out and breaks off.*] Wait—another time—here is some one coming.

LYNGSTRAND *appears on the road, from the left, and enters the garden. He has a flower in his button-hole, and carries a large handsome bouquet, wrapped round with paper and tied with ribbons. He stops, hesitating a little, in front of the veranda.*

ELLIDA.

[*Coming forward in the arbour.*] Is it the girls you are looking for, Mr. Lyngstrand?

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Turning.*] Ah, are you there, Mrs. Wangel? [*Bows and approaches.*] No, not exactly—it wasn't the young ladies. It was you yourself, Mrs. Wangel. You gave me permission to come and see you——

ELLIDA.

Yes, of course I did. You are always welcome here.

LYNGSTRAND.

Many thanks. I fortunately happened to hear that this was a day of rejoicing in the family——

ELLIDA.

Ah, so you know that?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes; and so I make so bold as to offer you this, Mrs. Wangel—— [*He bows and holds out the bouquet.*

ELLIDA.

[*Smiles.*] But, my dear Mr. Lyngstrand, ought you not to give your beautiful flowers to Mr. Arnholm himself? For it's in his honour that——

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Looks in bewilderment from one to the other.*] I beg your pardon—I don't know this gentleman. It's

[*Smiling quietly.*] Oh, I k
didn't know it was such a sec

ELLID.

What is it you know?

LYNGSTR

That it's your birthday, Mr

ELLID.

Mine?

ARNHO

[*Looking at her inquiringly.*]

ELLID

[*To* LYNGSTRAND.] What
head?

LYNGSTR

It was Miss Hilda that let it

ELLIDA.

Well?

LYNGSTRAND.

——and Miss Hilda answered: "Oh, because it's mother's birthday."

ELLIDA.

Mother's——! Oh indeed.

ARNHOLM.

Aha!

[*He and* ELLIDA *exchange glances of comprehension.*

ARNHOLM.

Well, since the young man has found it out, Mrs. Wangel——

ELLIDA.

[*To* LYNGSTRAND.] Yes, since you have found it out——

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Offers the bouquet again.*] May I be permitted to offer my congratulations——?

ELLIDA.

[*Taking the flowers.*] Many thanks.—Won't you sit down a moment, Mr. Lyngstrand?

[ELLIDA, ARNHOLM, *and* LYNGSTRAND *seat themselves in the arbour.*

ELLIDA.

All this about—about my birthday—was to have been a secret, Mr. Arnholm.

outsiders.

LYNGSTRA

I promise faithfully I won't
creature.

ELLIDA.

Oh, I didn't mean it in that
now? I think you are looking

LYNGSTRA

Yes, I think I am getting o
year, if I can get to the south–

ELLIDA

The girls tell me you hope t

LYNGSTR

Yes; you see I have a patro
for me; and he has promised t

ELLI

How did you come across h

ELLIDA.

Did you? Then at that time you wanted to be a sailor?

LYNGSTRAND.

No, not in the least. But after my mother died, my father wouldn't have me hanging about at home; so he sent me to sea. On the voyage home, we were wrecked in the English Channel; and that was a grand thing for me.

ARNHOLM.

How do you mean?

LYNGSTRAND.

It was in the wreck that I got my lesion—this weakness in my chest, you know. I was in the ice-cold water so long before they came and rescued me. So then I had to give up the sea—Oh yes, it was a great stroke of luck.

ARNHOLM.

Indeed? You think so?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes; for the lesion is nothing to speak of; and now I am to have my heart's desire, and to be a sculptor. Only think—to be able to model in the delicate clay that yields so exquisitely under your fingers!

ELLIDA.

And what are you going to model? Mermen and mermaids? Or is it to be old vikings——?

LYNGSTRAND.

No, nothing of that kind. As soon as I can manage it, I mean to have a try at a big piece of work—a group, as they call it.

ELLIDA.

I see. And what is the group to represent?

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh, I thought of something out of my own experience.

ARNHOLM.

Yes yes,—by all means stick to that.

ELLIDA.

But what is it to be?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, I had thought of a young woman, a sailor's wife, lying and sleeping in a strange unrest, and dreaming as she sleeps. I think I can make it so that any one can see she is dreaming.

ARNHOLM.

And is that all?

LYNGSTRAND.

No. There is to be one other figure—a kind of shape you might call it. It is the husband she has been unfaithful to while he was away. And now he is drowned.

ARNHOLM.

Why, what do you mean——?

ELLIDA.

Drowned you say?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, he is drowned at sea. But the strange thing is that he has come home nevertheless. It's in the night-time; and there he stands by her bedside and looks at her. He must be dripping wet, just as when they haul you up out of the sea.

ELLIDA.

[*Leaning back in her chair.*] What a strange idea! [*Closes her eyes.*] Oh, I can see it livingly before my eyes.

ARNHOLM.

But in the name of all that's wonderful, Mr. ——! Mr. ——! You said it was to be something out of your own experience?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes,—this is out of my own experience; in a sense, that's to say.

ARNHOLM.

You have seen a dead man come——?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, I don't mean to say I have actually seen it; not outwardly, of course. But all the same——

ELLIDA.

[*With animation and eagerness.*] Tell me all you know about this! I want to understand it thoroughly.

ARNHOLM.

[*Smiling.*] Yes, of course this is quite in your line—anything with the glamour of the sea about it.

ELLIDA.

How was it then, Mr. Lyngstrand?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, you see, when we were starting for home in the brig, from a town they call Halifax, we had to leave our boatswain behind us in the hospital; so we shipped an American in his place. This new boatswain——

ELLIDA.

The American?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes;—one day he borrowed from the captain a bundle of old newspapers, and was perpetually poring over them

LYNGSTRAND.

When all of a sudden, I heard him give a kind of a roar; and when I looked at him I saw that his face was as white as chalk. Then he set to work to crumple and crush the paper up, and tear it into a thousand little pieces; but that he did quietly, quietly.

ELLIDA.

Did he say nothing at all? Did he not speak?

LYNGSTRAND.

Not at first. But presently he said, as if to himself: "Married—to another man—while I was away."

ELLIDA.

[*Shuts her eyes, and says half to herself:*] Did he say that?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes; and would you believe it—he said it in perfectly good Norwegian. He must have had a great gift for languages, that man.

ELLIDA.

And what then? What happened next?

LYNGSTRAND.

Now comes the wonderful part of it—a thing I shall never forget to my dying day. For he added,—and this quite quietly too: "But mine she is, and mine she shall remain. And follow me she shall, though I should have to go home and fetch her, as a drowned man from the bottom of the sea."

ELLIDA.

[*Pouring out a glass of water; her hand shakes.*] Pah—how close it is to-day——!

LYNGSTRAND.

And he said it with such force of will that I felt he was the man to do it too.

ELLIDA.

Do you know at all—what has become of this man?

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh he's dead, Mrs. Wangel, beyond a doubt.

ELLIDA.

[*Hastily.*] What makes you think that?

LYNGSTRAND.

We were shipwrecked afterwards in the Channel, you know. I got off in the long-boat with the captain and five others; but the mate went in the dingey, and with him was the American and one man besides.

ELLIDA.

And nothing has been heard of them since?

LYNGSTRAND.

No, not a word, Mrs. Wangel. My patron wrote me so, only the other day. And that is the very reason I am

so anxious to make a group of it. I can see the sailor's faithless wife so life-like before me; and then the avenger, who is drowned, but nevertheless comes home from sea. I have them both before my eyes as distinctly as possible.

ELLIDA.

So have I. [*Rising.*] Come,—let us go in. Or rather down to Wangel! It seems to me so stifling here.

[*She comes out of arbour.*

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Who has also risen.*] I think I must be going now. I only just looked in to wish you many happy returns of the day.

ELLIDA.

Well, if you must go—— [*Holds out her hand.*] Good-bye, and thanks for the flowers.

[LYNGSTRAND *bows and goes through the garden gate, out to the left.*

ARNHOLM.

[*Rises and goes up to* ELLIDA.] I can see that this has pained you deeply, my dear Mrs. Wangel.

ELLIDA.

Oh yes, I suppose you may put it so, although——

ARNHOLM.

But after all, it is only what you must have been prepared for.

ELL

Prepared for his returning way?

ARNI

Why, what in the world– tor's cock-and-bull story——

ELI

Ah, my dear Arnholm, h you think.

ARN

Can it be this nonsense moved you so much? I t

EI

What did you think?

AR

ELLIDA.

Oh no, no; that must be as it may. I have no right to claim my husband for myself alone.

ARNHOLM.

Yet it seems to me you ought to have that right.

ELLIDA.

Yes; but as a matter of fact I haven't. That is the thing. I too live a life—in which the others have no part.

ARNHOLM.

You! [*More softly.*] Am I to understand that—you—you do not really love your husband?

ELLIDA.

Oh yes, yes—I have come to love him with my whole heart! And that is just why it is so terrible—so inexplicable—so absolutely inconceivable——!

ARNHOLM.

Now you must tell me all your troubles without reserve! Will you not, Mrs. Wangel?

ELLIDA.

I cannot, dear friend—not now, at any rate. Sometime, perhaps.

[BOLETTA *comes out by the veranda, and down into the garden.*

HILDA *from the left, be*

WANGEL

Well now, here I am, a free ma
cool wouldn't come amiss now.

ELLIDA.

Wait a moment.
[*She returns to the arbour an*

HILDA.

Oh I say! All those lovely f
get them?

ELLIDA.

I got them from Lyngstrand
Hilda.

HILDA.

[*Starting.*] From Lyngstrand

ELLIDA.

[*With a half-smile.*] Yes. He came to bring this bouquet,—a birthday offering, you know.

BOLETTA.

[*Glancing at* HILDA.] Oh——!

HILDA.

[*Mutters.*] The beast!

WANGEL.

[*In painful embarrassment, to* ELLIDA.] H'm——. Well, you see—I must tell you, my darling Ellida——

ELLIDA.

[*Interrupting.*] Come along, girls! Let us put my flowers in water, with the others.

[*She goes up on to the veranda.*

BOLETTA.

[*Softly to* HILDA.] She is really good after all, you see.

HILDA.

[*Half aloud, looking angry.*] Monkey-tricks! She's only putting it on to please father.

WANGEL.

[*Up on the veranda, presses* ELLIDA'S *hand.*] Thank you—thank you——! I thank you from my heart for this, Ellida.

ACT SECOND

Up at the Prospect, a wooded height behind the town. Towards the back stand a landmark and a weather-vane. Large stones for seats are placed round the landmark and in the foreground. Far below in the background the outer fiord is seen, with islands and jutting promontories. The open sea is not visible. A summer night with clear twilight. There is a tinge of orange in the upper air and over the mountain peaks in the far distance. The sound of quartette-singing is faintly heard from the lower slopes on the right.

Young people from the town, ladies and gentlemen, come in couples up from the right, pass the landmark conversing familiarly, and go out to the left. Shortly afterwards BALLESTED *appears, acting as guide to a party of foreign tourists. He is loaded with the ladies' shawls and satchels.*

BALLESTED.

[*Pointing upward with his stick.*] *Sehen Sie, meine Herrschaften*—over *dort liegt eine andere* height. *Das willen wir besteigen* too, *un herunter*——

[*He continues in English, and leads the party out to the right.*

HILDA *comes quickly up the slope on the right, stops, and looks backward. Presently* BOLETTA *comes up the same way.*

BOLETTA.

My dear Hilda, why should we run away from Lyngstrand?

HILDA.

Because I can't endure to walk up hill so slowly. Look—look at him crawling up.

BOLETTA.

Oh, you know how ill he is.

HILDA.

Do you think it's very serious?

BOLETTA.

Yes, I am sure it is.

HILDA.

He consulted father this afternoon. I wonder what father thinks of him.

BOLETTA.

Father told me that he has a hardening of the lungs—or something of that sort. He won't last very long, father says.

HILDA.

Did he really say so? Well now, that's exactly what I've been thinking.

BOLETTA.

But for heaven's sake don't let him suspect anything.

HILDA.

Oh, how can you think I would. [*In a lower tone.*] There!—now Hans has managed to clamber up. Hans——! Can't you see by the look of him that his name is Hans?

BOLETTA.

[*Whispers.*] Do be good now! I warn you!

LYNGSTRAND *enters from the right, a parasol in his hand.*

LYNGSTRAND.

I must beg your pardon, young ladies, for not being able to keep up with you.

HILDA.

So you have a got a parasol now?

LYNGSTRAND.

It's your mother's. She said I might use it for a stick, as I hadn't brought one with me.

BOLETTA.

Are they still down there? Father and the others?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes. Your father went into the restaurant for a moment, and the others are sitting outside listening to the music; but they'll come up by-and-by, your mother said.

HILDA.

[*Who is standing looking at him.*] I suppose you are very tired now?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I almost think I a m a little tired. I really believe I must sit down a bit.

[*He seats himself on a stone, in front to the right.*

HILDA.

[*Stands before him.*] Do you know that there's to be dancing presently, down by the band-stand?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I heard something of it.

HILDA.

I suppose you are very fond of dancing.

BOLETTA.

[*Who is wandering about picking small flowers among the heather.*] Oh, Hilda—let Mr. Lyngstrand get his breath.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*To* HILDA.] Yes, Miss Hilda, I should like very much to dance—if only I could.

HILDA.

Oh I see; you have never learned.

LYNGSTRAND.

No, I haven't. But that was not what I meant. I meant that I can't dance on account of my chest.

HILDA.

On account of that "lesion" you spoke of?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, that's it.

HILDA.

Does this "lesion" make you very unhappy?

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh no, I can't say it does. [*Smiling.*] For I believe it is that which makes everybody so kind and friendly and helpful to me.

HILDA.

Yes; and of course it's not a bit serious.

LYNGSTRAND.

No, not serious in the least. I could see quite well that your father thought so too.

HILDA.

And it will pass off as soon as you go abroad?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes; it will pass off.

BOLETTA.

[*With flowers in her hand.*] Look at these, Mr. Lyngstrand—here is one for your button-hole.

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh, a thousand thanks, Miss Wangel! You are really too kind.

HILDA.

[*Looking down the hill to the right.*] Here they are, coming up the path.

BOLETTA.

[*Also looking down.*] I hope they know where to turn off. No, they are going the wrong way.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Rises.*] I'll run down to the turning and call out to them.

BOLETTA.

Poor creature——!

HILDA.

If Lyngstrand were to propose to you, would you have him?

BOLETTA.

Are you out of your senses?

HILDA.

Oh I mean, of course, if he hadn't this "lesion"—and if he weren't going to die so soon. Would you have him t h e n?

BOLETTA.

I think y o u had better have him.

HILDA.

No, I'm bothered if I would. He hasn't a rap. He hasn't enough to live upon himself.

BOLETTA.

Why are you always so much taken up with him then?

HILDA.

Oh, that's only on account of his "lesion."

BOLETTA.

I have never noticed that you pity him a bit.

HILDA.

No more I do. But it's so tempting to me——

of it after all; nothing wa
enough—— I find that s

Bo

Thrilling!

H

Yes. I find it thrilling

Bo

Fie Hilda, you are real

I

Well, that's what I wa
down.] Ah, at last! A
climbing. [*Turns roun*
you think I noticed abo
dinner?

I

What?

BOLETTA.

Oh rubbish! I'm sure he isn't.

HILDA.

Yes he is. And he has wrinkles here, round both his eyes. Good heavens, Boletta, how c o u l d you be so gone on him when he was your tutor?

BOLETTA.

[*Smiling.*] Yes, can you understand it? I remember once shedding bitter tears because he said he thought Boletta an ugly name.

HILDA.

Think of that! [*Looks down again.*] I say! Look there! Just look!—There's "the lady from the sea" walking with him—not with father—and jabbering away to him. I wonder whether those two aren't a bit sweet on each other.

BOLETTA.

You ought really to be ashamed of yourself. How dare you say such things about her? We were beginning to get on so well together——

HILDA.

Oh, indeed!—Don't you believe it, my girl! I tell you we shall never get on well with her. She doesn't suit us, nor we her. Heaven knows what tempted father to drag her into the house!—I shouldn't wonder a bit if she were to go mad on our hands some fine day.

Yes, I should like to k
nose into. All I say is,
Be good now—for father'
[WANGEL, ELLIDA,
come up from the r

E

[*Points away towards*
there.

A

Yes, of course; it must

]

Out there lies the sea.

I

[*To* ARNHOLM.] Don

A

ARNHOLM.

No, never. In my time I doubt if it was accessible. There wasn't even a footpath.

WANGEL.

And no grounds laid out either. We have done all that in the last few years.

BOLETTA.

Over there, on the Pilot's Knoll, the view is even finer.

WANGEL.

Shall we go there, Ellida?

ELLIDA.

[*Seats herself upon a stone to the right.*] Thank you, I won't go. But you others ought to. I shall stay here in the meantime.

WANGEL.

Very well; then I'll stay with you. The girls can do the honours for Arnholm.

BOLETTA.

Do you care to come with us, Mr. Arnholm?

ARNHOLM.

Yes, I should like to. Is there a path up there too?

BOLETTA.

Oh yes; a good broad path.

HILDA.

There's plenty of room for two people to go arm-in-arm.

ARNHOLM.

[*Jestingly.*] I wonder if there is, little Miss Hilda? [*To* BOLETTA.] Shall we two try if she is right?

BOLETTA.

[*Repressing a smile.*] Yes, if you like. Let us.

[*They go out to the left, arm-in-arm.*

HILDA.

[*To* LYNGSTRAND.] Shall we go too——?

LYNGSTRAND.

Arm-in-arm——?

HILDA.

WANGEL.

[*Who is standing at the back, beside the landmark.*] Dear Ellida, now we have a little time to ourselves——

ELLIDA.

Yes, come and sit here beside me.

WANGEL.

[*Seats himself.*] It's so open and peaceful here. Now let us have a little talk.

ELLIDA.

What about?

WANGEL.

About you; and about our relation to each other, Ellida. I see well enough that this state of things cannot continue.

ELLIDA.

What would you have in its place?

WANGEL.

Full confidence, dear. A life in common—such as we used to live.

ELLIDA.

Oh, if that could only be! But it's so utterly impossible!

WANGEL.

I think I understand you. From certain things you have let fall now and then, I believe I do.

a loyal heart.

I

Yes, I have.

W

Any relation in which
must be a full and perfe

]

[*Looking anxiously at*

Y

You are not fitted to l

What makes you thin

The suspicion has of
I saw it clearly. The
you looked on me as a
memories are n

WANGEL.

But you are mistaken, none the less. It seems to you almost as though the children's mother were still alive. You feel her invisible presence in our midst. You think that my heart is equally divided between you and her. It is this idea that revolts you. You see, as it were, something immoral in our relation; and that is why you cannot, or will not, live with me any more as my wife.

ELLIDA.

[*Rises.*] Have you seen all this, Wangel? Seen through all this?

WANGEL.

Yes, to-day I have at last seen through it—into the very depths.

ELLIDA.

Into the very depths, you say. Oh, you mustn't think that.

WANGEL.

[*Rises.*] I know very well that there is more than this, dear Ellida.

ELLIDA.

[*Apprehensively.*] You know that there is more?

WANGEL.

Yes. There is this: that you cannot endure your surroundings here. The mountains oppress you and weigh upon your spirits. There is not light enough for you here—the horizon is not wide enough—the air not strong and stimulating enough for you.

ELLIDA.

There you are quite right. Night and day, winter and summer, it is upon me—this haunting home-sickness for the sea.

WANGEL.

I know it well, dear Ellida. [*Lays his hand upon her head.*] And therefore the poor sick child must go to its own home again.

ELLIDA.

How do you mean?

WANGEL.

Quite literally. We will move.

ELLIDA.

Move!

WANGEL.

Yes. Out somewhere by the open sea,—to some place

WANGEL.

A r e you mine, Ellida?

ELLIDA.

Oh, please say no more of that scheme. Here you have all that is life and breath to you. Your whole life-work lies here, and here only.

WANGEL.

That must be as it may, I say. We will move from here—move seaward somewhere. My mind is made up beyond recall, dear Ellida.

ELLIDA.

Oh, but what do you suppose we shall gain by t h a t?

WANGEL.

You will regain your health and peace of mind.

ELLIDA.

I doubt it. But you yourself! Think of yourself too. What would y o u gain?

WANGEL.

I should regain you, my dearest.

ELLIDA.

But that you cannot do! No, no, you cannot, Wangel! That is just the terrible, the heart-breaking part of it.

WANGEL.

That remains to be seen. If you are haunted by such thoughts here, then assuredly there is nothing for it but to get you away from here. And the sooner the better. My mind is made up beyond recall, I tell you.

ELLIDA.

No! Rather than that,—Heaven help me—I will tell you everything without reserve, exactly as it is.

WANGEL.

Yes, yes—do!

ELLIDA.

You shall not make yourself unhappy for my sake; especially as it would do us no good, after all.

WANGEL.

and openly about your first marriage. You said it had been very happy.

WANGEL.

And so it was.

ELLIDA.

Yes, yes; I do not doubt it, dear. That is not why I speak of it now. I only want to remind you that I, on my side, was frank with you. I told you quite openly that I had once in my life cared for some one else. That it had come to—a sort of betrothal between us.

WANGEL.

A sort of——?

ELLIDA.

Yes, something of the kind. Well, it lasted only a very short time. He went away; and afterwards I broke it off. All this I told you.

WANGEL.

But, dear Ellida, why go back upon all this? After all, it did not really concern me. I have never even asked you who he was.

ELLIDA.

No, you have not. You are always so considerate to me.

WANGEL.

[*Smiling.*] Well, in this case,—I scarcely needed to be told his name.

ELLIDA.

His name?

W

Yes—was it not?

]

No.

\

It was not? Well the

Do you remember th
a large American ship

Yes, I remember it
the captain was found
ing. I remember goin

Yes, you did.

WANGEL.

No; but I think there is no doubt about it. Else why should he have gone and drowned himself?

ELLIDA.

He did not drown himself. He escaped in a vessel bound for the north.

WANGEL.

[*Starts.*] How do you know that?

ELLIDA.

[*With an effort.*] Because, Wangel—because it was that second mate to whom I—was betrothed.

WANGEL.

[*Starting up.*] What do you say? Can this be possible?

ELLIDA.

Yes.—he was the man.

WANGEL.

But how in the world, Ellida——? How could you do such a thing! Go and engage yourself to such a man as that! A man you knew nothing on earth about!—What was his name?

ELLIDA.

He called himself Friman[1] then. Afterwards, in his letters, he signed himself Alfred Johnston.

[1] Pronounce *Freeman*.

WANGEL.

And where did he come from?

ELLIDA.

From Finmark, he said. He was born over in Finland though. He had come across the frontier as a child,—with his father I think.

WANGEL.

He was a Quæn, then.

ELLIDA.

Yes, I believe they are called so.

WANGEL.

What more do you know of him?

ELLIDA.

Only that he went to sea very young, and that he had made long voyages.

WANGEL.

Nothing else?

ELLIDA.

No; we never talked about such things.

WANGEL.

What did you talk about then?

ELLIDA.

Mainly about the sea.

WANGEL.

Ah——! About the sea?

ELLIDA.

About storm and calm. About dark nights at sea. About the sea in the glittering sunshine, too. But we talked most about the whales, and the porpoises, and the seals that lie out upon the reefs and bask in the midday sun. And then we spoke of the gulls and the eagles, and all the other sea-birds, you know. And—is it not strange?—when we talked of such things, it seemed to me as though both the sea-animals and the sea-birds were akin to him.

WANGEL.

And you yourself——?

ELLIDA.

Yes, I almost thought that I, too, was akin to all of them.

WANGEL.

Yes, yes.—And that was how you came to betroth yourself to him?

ELLIDA.

Yes; he said I was to do it.

WANGEL.

Was to? Had you no will of your own?

ELLIDA.

Not when he was near. Oh—afterwards it all seemed so utterly inexplicable to me.

WANGEL.

Did you see him often?

ELLIDA.

No, not very often. He went over the lighthouse one day; that is how I came to know him. And afterwards we used to meet occasionally. But then came this affair about the captain; and he had to go away.

WANGEL.

Oh yes, let me hear about that!

ELLIDA

It was in the dusk of the early morning that I got a line from him. It said that I must come out to him at Bratthammer[1]—you know, the headland between the lighthouse and Skioldvik.

WANGEL.

Yes, yes—I know it well.

ELLIDA.

I must come there immediately, the note said for he wanted to speak to me.

WANGEL.

And you went?

ELLIDA.

Yes. I could not help it. Well—he told me that he had stabbed the captain in the night.

[1] Pronounce *Bratt-hammer*.

WANGEL.

He told you himself! Said it straight out!

ELLIDA.

Yes. But he had only done what was right and just, he said.

WANGEL.

Right and just? What reason did he give, then, for stabbing him?

ELLIDA.

He would not tell me the reason. He said it was not a thing for me to hear about.

WANGEL.

And you believed him, on his bare word?

ELLIDA.

Yes, I never thought of doubting him. Well, at all events he had to go away. But when he was on the point of saying good-bye to me—— No, you could never imagine what he did.

WANGEL.

Well, tell me then.

ELLIDA.

He took a key-ring out of his pocket, and drew off his finger a ring he used to wear. Then he took from me a little ring that I had, and these two he slipped together on the key-ring. And then he said that now we two should together be wedded to the sea.

WANGEL.

Wedded——?

ELLIDA.

Yes, so he said. And then he flung the large ring and the two small ones as far as ever he could into the deep water.

WANGEL.

And you, Ellida? Did you agree to that?

ELLIDA.

Yes, would you believe it, I thought at the time that it was all as it should be.—But, thank heaven, then he went away!

WANGEL.

And when once he was away?

WANGEL.

Did you write?

ELLIDA.

Immediately. I said, of course, that all must be over between us—that he must never think of me again, as I meant never to think any more of him.

WANGEL.

And did he write again, in spite of that?

ELLIDA.

Yes, he wrote again.

WANGEL.

And what was his answer to what you had said?

ELLIDA.

Not a word. He wrote just as if I had never broken with him. He told me quite calmly that I must wait for him. When he was ready for me he would let me know, and then I was to come to him at once.

WANGEL.

Then he would not release you?

ELLIDA.

No. So I wrote again, almost word for word the same as before: only more strongly.

WANGEL.

And did he give way then?

ELLIDA.

Oh no, far from it. He wrote as calmly as before. Never a word about my having broken with him. Then I saw it was useless, so I wrote to him no more.

WANGEL.

And did not hear from him either?

ELLIDA.

Yes, I have had three letters from him since. Once he wrote from California and once from China. The last letter I got from him was from Australia. He said he was going to the gold-mines; and since then I have heard nothing from him.

WANGEL.

That man must have had an extraordinary power over you, Ellida.

WANGEL.

To throw what off, dear? What do you mean?

ELLIDA.

I mean the terror of him. His unfathomable p over my soul——

WANGEL.

But you h a v e thrown it off! Long ago; whe broke with him. It is all over, long ago.

ELLIDA.

[*Springs up.*] No, that is just what it is not!

WANGEL.

Not over!

ELLIDA.

No, Wangel—it is not over! And I am afraid it will be over. Never in this life.

WANGEL.

[*In a choked voice.*] Do you mean to say that you never in your heart of hearts been able to forget strange man?

ELLIDA.

I had forgotten him. But then, all at once, he se to come again.

WANGEL.

How long ago is that?

ELLIDA.

It is about three years ago now, or a little more. It was whilst—before the child was born.

WANGEL.

Ah! It was then, was it? In that case, Ellida—I begin to understand much more clearly.

ELLIDA.

You are wrong, dear! This thing that has come over me—oh, I don't think it can ever be understood.

WANGEL.

[*Looks at her, pained.*] To think that for all these three years your heart has been given to another man. To another! Not to me,—but to another!

ELLIDA.

Yes, dread. Such a dread, such a terror, as can arise only from the sea. For now I must tell you, Wangel——

[*The young townspeople come back from the left, bow, and go out to the right. With them come* ARNHOLM, BOLETTA, HILDA, *and* LYNGSTRAND.

BOLETTA.

[*As they pass by.*] What! Still up here?

ELLIDA.

Yes, it's so delightfully cool up here on the heights.

ARNHOLM.

For our part, we are going down to have a dance.

WANGEL.

Very well. We will come too, in a little while.

HILDA.

Good-bye for the present then.

ELLIDA.

Mr. Lyngstrand—will you please wait a moment?

[LYNGSTRAND *stops.* ARNHOLM, BOLETTA, *and* HILDA *go out to the right.*

ELLIDA.

[*To* LYNGSTRAND.] Are you going to dance too?

LYNGSTRAND.

No, Mrs. Wangel, I'm afraid I must not.

ELLIDA.

No, you ought to be careful. That weakness in your chest—you have not quite got over it yet.

LYNGSTRAND.

No, not thoroughly.

ELLIDA.

[*Somewhat hesitatingly.*] How long is it now since you made that voyage——?

LYNGSTRAND.

When I got the lesion?

ELLIDA.

[*Looking at* WANGEL.] You see that was the time——

WANGEL.

But, my dear Ellida——?

ELLIDA.

Well, don't let us detain you, Mr. Lyngstrand. Go; but don't dance.

LYNGSTRAND.

No, I shall only look on. [*He goes out to the right.*

WANGEL.

Dear Ellida—why did you cross-question him about that voyage?

ELLIDA.

Johnston was in the same ship. Of that I am perfectly certain.

WANGEL.

What makes you think so?

ELLIDA.

[*Without answering.*] He came to know, during the voyage, that I had married some one else, while he was away. And then—at the very same moment, this came upon me!

WANGEL.

This dread?

EL

Just as I saw him last.

WA

Ten years ago?

EL

Yes. Out at Bratthamr
distinctly of all, with a la
That pearl is like a dead
glare at me.

W.

Good God——! You
more ill than you know y

E

Yes, yes,—help me if
round me more and more

W

ELLIDA.

Oh I could not! Not till now, when it became necessary for your own sake. If I had told you all this—then I must also have told you—the unspeakable.

WANGEL.

The unspeakable——?

ELLIDA.

[*Evasively.*] No, no, no! Do not ask! Only one thing more, and I have done.—Wangel—how shall we fathom the mystery—of the child's eyes——?

WANGEL.

My own dear Ellida, I assure you it was pure imagination on your part. The child had exactly the same eyes as other normal children.

ELLIDA.

No, it had not! How could you help seeing it? The child's eyes changed colour with the sea. If the fiord lay in a sunny calm, the eyes were calm and sunny. And the same way in storms.—Oh, I saw it well enough, if you did not.

WANGEL.

[*Humouring her.*] H'm,—perhaps so. But even if it were? What then?

ELLIDA.

[*Softly, and drawing nearer to him.*] I have seen eyes like that before.

WANGEL.

When? And where——?

ELLIDA.

Out at Bratthammer. Ten years ago.

WANGEL.

[*Recoils a step.*] What do you——

ELLIDA.

[*Whispers, trembling.*] The child had the strange man's eyes.

WANGEL.

[*Cries out involuntarily.*] Ellida——

ELLIDA.

ACT THIRD

A remote corner of DR. WANGEL'S *garden. The place is damp, marshy, and overshadowed by large old trees. To the right is seen the edge of a stagnant pond. A low open fence divides the garden from the footpath and fiord in the background. In the farthest distance, beyond the fiord, mountain ranges rise into peaks. It is late afternoon, almost evening.*

BOLETTA *sits sewing upon a stone seat to the left. On the seat lie a couple of books and a work-basket.* HILDA *and* LYNGSTRAND, *both with fishing-tackle, stand by the edge of the pond.*

HILDA.

[*Makes a sign to* LYNGSTRAND.] Stand still. I see a big one there.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Looking.*] Where is it?

HILDA.

[*Points.*] Can't you see—down there. And look! I declare there's another! [*Looks away through the trees.*] Ugh—there he comes to frighten them away!

BOLETTA.

[*Looks up.*] Who is coming?

HILDA.

Your tutor, miss!

BOLETTA.

My——?

HILDA.

Yes; thank goodness he was never mine!

ARNHOLM *comes forward among the trees on the right.*

ARNHOLM.

Are there fish in the pond now?

HILDA.

Yes, there are some very old carp.

ARNHOLM.

HILDA.

Yes, it's more thrilling here.—Have you just been having a bathe?

ARNHOLM.

Precisely. I've come straight from the bathing-house.

HILDA.

I suppose you kept within the enclosure?

ARNHOLM.

Yes, I'm no great swimmer.

HILDA.

Can you swim on your back?

ARNHOLM.

No.

HILDA.

I can. [*To* LYNGSTRAND.] Let us try over there on the other side. [*They skirt the pond, out to the right.*

ARNHOLM.

[*Advances to* BOLETTA.] You are all alone, Boletta?

BOLETTA.

Oh yes, I generally am.

ARNHOLM.

Is not your mother in the garden?

BOLETTA.

No; I think she is out walking with father.

ARNHOLM.

How is she this afternoon?

BOLETTA.

I don't quite know. I forgot to ask.

ARNHOLM.

What are the books you have there?

BOLETTA.

Oh, one is a botanical book, and the other a descriptive geography.

ARNHOLM.

ARNHOLM.

But you are as fond as ever of reading?

BOLETTA.

Yes, I read all the useful books I can get hold of. One wants to know a little about the world. Here we live so entirely outside of everything,—or almost entirely.

ARNHOLM.

No, my dear Boletta, don't say that.

BOLETTA.

But I do say so. I don't see much difference between our life and the life of the carp in the pond there. They have the fiord close beside them, where the great free shoals of fish sweep out and in. But the poor tame house-fishes know nothing of all that; and they can never join in.

ARNHOLM.

I don't think it would agree with them at all if they did get out into the fiord.

BOLETTA.

Oh, they might take their chance of t h a t, I should think.

ARNHOLM.

Besides, you can't say that you are so utterly out of the world here. Not in summer, at all events. This place is a sort of local centre, nowadays, in the life of the world—a point of convergence for many passing streams.

BOLETTA.

[*Smiling.*] Oh, you are in the passing stream yourself; it is easy for you to make game of us.

ARNHOLM.

I make game——? What puts that into your head?

BOLETTA.

Why, all this about a centre, and a point of convergence for the life of the world, is simply what you have heard people say in the town. They are always talking like that.

ARNHOLM.

Yes, frankly, I have noticed as much.

BOLETTA.

But there's really not a word of truth in it, you know—not for us who live here constantly. What is it to us that the great outside world passes our doors on its way to the midnight sun? We cannot join in the stream. There is no midnight sun for us. Oh no; we must be content to linger our lives out, here in our carp-pond.

ARNHOLM.

[*Seats himself beside her.*] Tell me now, dear Boletta—I wonder if there is not something or other—some particular thing I mean—that you are all the time longing for, here at home?

BOLETTA.

Well, perhaps there may be.

ARNHOLM.

Then what is it? What are you longing for?

BOLETTA.

Chiefly to get away.

ARNHOLM.

That before everything?

BOLETTA.

Yes. And next to learn a little more; to gain some real insight into things in general.

ARNHOLM.

When I used to read with you, your father often said that he would let you go to college.

BOLETTA.

Oh yes, poor father,—he says so many things. But when it comes to the point, then—— There is no real energy in father.

ARNHOLM.

No, unfortunately—I suppose there is not. But have you ever talked to him about this? Put serious pressure on him, I mean?

BOLETTA.

No, I can't say that I have.

ARNHOLM.

Well now really, Boletta, you ought to do so, before it is too late. Why don't you?

BOLETTA.

Oh, because there is no real energy in me either, I suppose. I probably take after father in that.

ARNHOLM.

H'm—I wonder whether you don't do yourself injustice there?

BOLETTA.

Oh no, I'm sorry to say. And then father has so little time to think about me and my future—and not much inclination either. He puts things of that sort aside as much as he can; he is so entirely taken up with Ellida——

ARNHOLM.

With whom——? How——?

BOLETTA.

BOLETTA.

Yes, I suppose there is nothing else for it. Of course I ought to think of myself too, and try to find a position of some sort. When once father is gone I shall have no one to depend on.—But poor father,—I dread the thought of leaving him.

ARNHOLM.

Dread——?

BOLETTA.

Yes, for his own sake.

ARNHOLM.

But, bless me, what about your stepmother? She will still be with him.

BOLETTA.

Yes, that's true. But she is not at all fitted for all that mother knew so well how to do. There are so many things she doesn't see—or perhaps will not see—or trouble herself about. I don't know which way to put it.

ARNHOLM.

H'm—I think I understand what you mean?

BOLETTA.

Poor father,—he is weak in certain ways. I daresay you have noticed that yourself. You see he hasn't enough work to fill up his whole time; and then she is quite incapable of being any support to him.—That is partly his own fault, however.

ARNHOLM.

How so?

BOLETTA.

Oh, father always likes to see cheerful faces around him; there must be sunshine and contentment in the house, he says. So I am afraid he often lets her have medicine that does her no good in the long run.

ARNHOLM.

Do you really think so?

BOLETTA.

Yes, I can't get rid of the idea. She is so strange at times. [*Vehemently.*] But it does seem hard, does it not, that I should have to stay on at home here? It does not in reality help father at all; and I can't but feel that I have duties towards myself too.

ARNHOLM.

Yes, believe me; it lies wholly and solely in your own hands.

BOLETTA.

Oh, if it only did——! Do you mean that you will put in a good word for me with father?

ARNHOLM.

I will do that too. But first of all I want to speak frankly and without reserve to you yourself, my dear Boletta. [*Looks out to the left.*] Hush! Let no one notice anything; we'll finish our talk by-and-by.

ELLIDA *enters from the left. She wears no hat, but has a light shawl thrown over her head and shoulders.*

ELLIDA.

[*With nervous animation.*] How nice it is here! How delightful!

ARNHOLM.

[*Rising.*] Have you been out walking?

ELLIDA.

Yes, a long, long splendid walk with Wangel. And now we are going out for a sail.

BOLETTA.

Won't you sit down?

ELLIDA.

No thank you; I couldn't sit.

BOLETTA.

[*Moving along the bench.*] There's plenty of room.

ELLIDA.

[*Walking about.*] No no no, I couldn't sit; I couldn't sit.

ARNHOLM.

Your walk has surely done you good; it seems to have exhilarated you.

ELLIDA.

Oh, I feel so thoroughly well. I feel so unspeakably happy! So safe! So safe—— [*Looks out to the left.*] What large steamer is that coming in?

BOLETTA.

[*Rises and looks out.*] It must be the big English boat

ARNHOLM.

Have you never taken a long sea-voyage, Mrs. Wangel?

ELLIDA.

Never in my life; only little trips in the fiords.

BOLETTA.

[*With a sigh.*] Oh no, we have to put up with the dry land.

ARNHOLM.

Well, at any rate, that is our natural element.

ELLIDA.

No, I don't think so at all.

ARNHOLM.

Not dry land?

ELLIDA.

No, I don't believe it. I believe that if men had only accustomed themselves from the first to live their life on the sea—or even in the sea—we should by this time have been far more perfect than we are;—both better and happier.

ARNHOLM.

Do you really believe that?

ELLIDA.

Well, at any rate, it is a theory of mine. I have often talked of it with Wangel.

ARNHOLM.

Indeed! And he——?

ELLIDA.

Oh, he thinks there may be something in it.

ARNHOLM.

[*Joking.*] Well, who knows? But what's done is done. We have once for all taken the wrong turning and become land animals instead of sea animals. All things considered. I'm afraid it is too late now to rectify the error.

ELLIDA.

Yes, that is the mournful truth. And I believe people have an instinctive feeling of it themselves—it haunts them like a secret sorrow and regret. Believe me, this lies at the very root of the melancholy of mankind. I

BOLETTA.

You shouldn't let yourself dwell on such sad thoughts. You were so bright and cheerful a moment ago——

ELLIDA.

Yes yes, so I was. All this is—it's so stupid of me. [*Looks uneasily around.*] If only Wangel would come down here. He promised me so faithfully; and yet he doesn't come. He must have forgotten. Dear Mr. Arnholm, won't you go and find him for me?

ARNHOLM.

Yes, with pleasure.

ELLIDA.

Tell him that he really must come at once; for now I cannot see him——

ARNHOLM.

Not see him——?

ELLIDA.

Oh, you don't understand me. When he is not present, I often can't remember what he looks like; and then it seems as though I had lost him utterly.—It's so terribly painful. Do go!

[*She wanders over in the direction of the pond.*

BOLETTA.

[*To* ARNHOLM.] I will go with you; you don't know——

ARNHOLM.

Oh don't trouble: I shall manage——

BOLETTA.

[*In an undertone.*] No no, I am uneasy. I'm afraid he is on board the steamer.

ARNHOLM.

Afraid?

BOLETTA.

Yes, he generally goes to see if there is any one he knows among the passengers; and there's a refreshment bar on board——

ARNHOLM.

Ah! Come along then.

[*He and* BOLETTA *go out to the left.*

[ELLIDA *stands awhile gazing into the pond. From time to time she talks softly and in broken phrases to herself.*

Outside on the footpath beyond the garden fence a

THE STRANGER.

Yes, at last.

ELLIDA.

[*Looks at him, astonished and apprehensive.*] Who are you? Are you looking for some one here?

THE STRANGER.

You know I am.

ELLIDA.

[*Taken aback.*] What is this? How strangely you speak to me![1] Who is it you are looking for?

THE STRANGER.

You know I am looking for you.

ELLIDA.

[*Starts.*] Ah——! [*Gazes at him a moment, staggers backwards, and breaks out into a half-smothered shriek.*] The eyes!—The eyes!

THE STRANGER.

Well,—are you beginning to recognise me at last? I knew you at once, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

The eyes. Don't look at me like that. I will call for help.

[1] He has addressed her, as he does throughout, by the familiar *du*—"thou." She always uses the formal *De* in speaking to him.

[*Holds her hands* ...
like that, I say!

THE S

[*Leans his arms upon th*
the English steamer.

EL

[*Glances shrinkingly at h*
me?

THE S

I promised I would com

E

Go! Go away again!
more! I wrote to you tl
between us! Everything

THE

[*Unmoved, without ans*
you sooner, but I could n

THE STRANGER.

You know quite well that I have come to take you away.

ELLIDA.

[*Shrinking back in terror.*] To take me away! Is that what you intend?

THE STRANGER.

Yes, of course.

ELLIDA.

But surely you know that I am married!

THE STRANGER.

Yes, I know it.

ELLIDA.

And yet——! In spite of that, you have come to—to—take me away!

THE STRANGER.

Yes, you see I have.

ELLIDA.

[*Presses both her hands to her head.*] Oh this fearful——! Oh this terror, this terror——!

THE STRANGER.

Perhaps you do not wish to come!

ELLIDA.

[*Beside herself.*] Don't look at me like that!

I will not, I say. [illegible]
dare not, either.

THE S

[*Climbs over the fence*
Very well then, Ellida—let
before I go.

EL

[*Tries to escape, but cann*
with fear, and supports he
the pond.] Do not touch
Stay where you are! Do

THE S

[*Cautiously, coming a s*
must not be so afraid of m

E

[*Puts her hands before*
like that!

THE

WANGEL.

[*Before he has quite emerged from among the trees.*] Well, I've kept you waiting a nice time.

ELLIDA.

[*Rushes to him, clings fast to his arm and cries.*] Oh Wangel,—save me! Save me—if you can!

WANGEL.

Ellida,—what in heaven's name——!

ELLIDA.

Save me, Wangel! Don't you see him? There he stands!

WANGEL.

[*Looks at the* STRANGER.] That man there? [*Goes towards him.*] Who are y o u, may I ask? And why have you come into this garden?

THE STRANGER.

[*Indicates* ELLIDA *by a nod.*] I want to speak to h e r.

WANGEL.

Indeed. Then I suppose it was you——? [*To* ELLIDA.] I hear a stranger called at the house and asked for you.

THE STRANGER.

Yes, it was I.

[*Softly, wringing her hands*
yes, yes!

WAN

[*Hastily.*] Well?

ELL

Oh, it is h e, Wangel!
know——!

WAN

What? What doyou say?
Johnston, who was——?

THE ST

Well—you can call me Jo
my name though.

WAN

Is it not?

THE ST

Not now, it isn't.

WAN

THE STRANGER.

I have known that for more than three years.

ELLIDA.

[*Eagerly.*] How did you come to know it?

THE STRANGER.

I was on my way home to you. I came across an old newspaper—one from these parts; and in it was the notice of your marriage.

ELLIDA.

[*Looking straight before her.*] My marriage—— So it was t h a t——

THE STRANGER.

It came upon me very strangely. For the linking of the rings—that was a marriage, too, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

[*Puts her hands before her face.*] Oh——!

WANGEL.

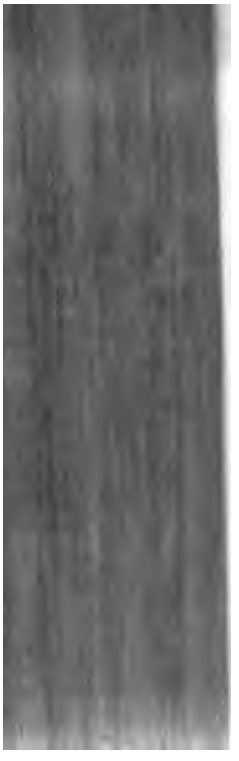
How dare you——?

THE STRANGER.

Had you forgotten it?

ELLIDA.

[*Cries out, as though she felt his look.*] Do not stand looking at me like that!



THE

I had promised Ellida
soon as I could.

W

Ellida——! Again!

THE

And Ellida had promi
I came.

I observe that you c
That sort of familiarity

THE

I know that very well
to me——

To you! Still——!

vanishes behind WA

THE STRANGER.

Has she told you about the two rings? My ring and Ellida's?

WANGEL.

Yes, certainly. But what then? She broke it off again afterwards. You received her letters; so you know it perfectly well.

THE STRANGER.

Ellida and I were fully agreed that the linking of the rings was to be in every way as valid and binding as a marriage.

ELLIDA.

But I refuse, I tell you! Never in this world will I have anything more to do with you! Do not look at me like that! I will not, I tell you!

WANGEL.

You must be out of your senses if you think you can come here and found any claim upon such a piece of child's-play as that.

THE STRANGER.

That is true. In the way you mean, I have certainly no claim upon her.

WANGEL.

What do you want to do then? You cannot imagine that you can take her from me by force,—against her own will!

THE STRANGER.

No. What would be the use of that? If Ellida is to be mine, she must come of her own free will.

ELLIDA.

[*Starts and cries out.*] Of my own free will——

WANGEL.

And can you suppose——!

ELLIDA.

[*To herself.*] My own free will——!

WANGEL.

You must be out of your mind. Take yourself off! We have nothing more to do with you.

THE STRANGER.

THE STRANGER.

[*Still to* ELLIDA.] I am going up the fiord in the steamer now; to-morrow night I shall return, and then I will see you again. You must wait for me here in the garden; for I prefer to settle the matter with you alone, you understand.

ELLIDA.

[*Softly and trembling.*] Oh, do you hear that, Wangel?

WANGEL.

Do not be alarmed. We shall find means to prevent this visit.

THE STRANGER.

Good-bye for the present, Ellida. To-morrow night then.

ELLIDA.

[*In a tone of entreaty.*] Oh, no, no,—do not come to-morrow night! Never come again!

THE STRANGER.

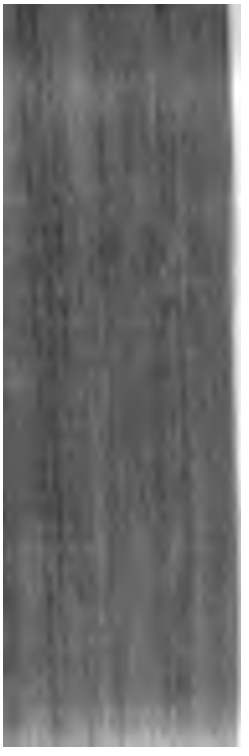
And if by that time you should be of a mind to come with me over the sea——

ELLIDA.

Oh, do not look at me like that——

THE STRANGER.

I only mean that in that case you must be ready to start.



THE

For you must remem
with me to-morrow, it w

[*Looks at him, trembl*
ever——?

THE

[*With a nod.*] Beyo
return to this country;
nor hear from me eithe
gone from you, for eve

[*Breathes uneasily.*]

THE

So think carefully

ELLIDA.

[*Looks after him a while.*] Of my own free will, he said! Think of that—he said that I should go with him of my own free will.

WANGEL.

Be calm, be calm. He is gone now, and you shall never see him again.

ELLIDA.

Oh, how can you say that? He is coming again to-morrow night.

WANGEL.

Let him come; I will see that he does not meet you.

ELLIDA.

[*Shakes her head.*] Oh Wangel, do not think that you can prevent him.

WANGEL.

Yes I can, dearest—rely upon me.

ELLIDA.

[*Musing, without listening to him.*] When he has been here—to-morrow night——? And when he has gone away in the steamer, over the sea——?

WANGEL.

Well, what then?

ELLIDA.

I wonder whether he will never—never come again?

WANGEL.

No, dear Ellida, you may feel absolutely secure on that point. What could he do here after this? He has heard now, from your own lips, that you will have nothing to do with him. That ends the whole thing.

ELLIDA.

[*To herself.*] To-morrow then—or never.

WANGEL.

And even if he should take it into his head to come again——

ELLIDA.

[*Eagerly.*] What then——?

WANGEL.

Why, we know how to make him harmless.

WANGEL.

We know nothing! Why, he himself confessed it to you!

ELLIDA

No, nothing about that! If you say anything, I will deny it. He shall not be caged! His place is out on the open sea. That is his home.

WANGEL.

[*Looks at her and says slowly:*] Ah, Ellida—Ellida!

ELLIDA.

[*Clings to him passionately.*] Oh dear one, faithful one—save me from that man!

WANGEL.

[*Gently disengaging himself.*] Come! Come with me!

LYNGSTRAND *and* HILDA, *both with fishing-tackle, appear from the right beside the pond.*

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Goes rapidly towards* ELLIDA.] Oh, what do you think, Mrs. Wangel—I have something wonderful to tell you!

WANGEL.

What is it?

LYNGSTRAND.

Just fancy—we have seen the American!

WANGEL.

The American?

HILDA.

Yes, I saw him too.

LYNGSTRAND.

He went round by the back of the garden, and then on board the big English steamer.

WANGEL.

Where have you known that man?

LYNGSTRAND.

I was at sea with him once. I was quite sure he was drowned; and here he appears as large as life.

WANGEL.

ELLIDA.

You shall hear all about it by-and-by.

ARNHOLM *and* BOLETTA *enter from the left along the footpath outside the garden fence.*

BOLETTA.

[*To those in the garden.*] Come and look! The English steamer is going up the fiord.

[*A large steamer glides slowly past at some distance.*

LYNGSTRAND.

[*To* HILDA, *near the garden fence.*] I am sure he will come down upon her to-night.

HILDA.

[*Nods.*] Upon his faithless wife—yes.

LYNGSTRAND.

Fancy,—just at midnight.

HILDA.

I think it will be thrilling.

ELLIDA.

[*Looking after the ship.*] To-morrow then——

WANGEL.

And after that, never again.

ELLIDA.

[*Softly and trembling.*] Oh Wangel—save me from myself.

WANGEL.

[*Looks anxiously at her.*] Ellida! I feel it—there is something behind all this.

ELLIDA.

All that allures is behind it.

WANGEL.

All that allures——?

ELLIDA.

That man is like the sea.

[*She goes slowly and in deep thought through the garden out to the left.* WANGEL *walks uneasily by her side, observing her intently.*

ACT FOURTH

Garden-room at DR. WANGEL'S. *Doors right and left. In the back, between the two windows, an open glass door leading out to the veranda. A portion of the garden is seen below. A sofa and table in front on the left. To the right a piano, and farther back a large flower-stand. In the middle of the floor a round table with chairs about it. On the table, a rose-bush in bloom, and other plants in pots about the room. It is forenoon.*

BOLETTA *is seated on the sofa by the table, left, working at a piece of embroidery.* LYNGSTRAND *sits on a chair at the upper end of the table.* BALLESTED *is seated in the garden, painting.* HILDA *stands beside him, looking on.*

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Sits silent awhile with his arms on the table, watching* BOLETTA *at work.*] It must be very difficult to sew edging like that, Miss Wangel.

BOLETTA.

Oh no, it's not so difficult, if only you are careful to count right——

LYNGSTRAND.

Count? Have you to count?

BOLETTA.

Yes, the stitches. Look here.

LYNGSTRAND.

Why, so you must! Fancy! It's almost a kind of art Can you draw too?

BOLETTA.

Oh yes, when I have a copy before me.

LYNGSTRAND.

Not unless?

BOLETTA.

No, not unless.

LYNGSTRAND.

Then it's not really art after all.

BOLETTA.

No, it's more of a—a knack.

LYNGSTRAND.

I don't mean "learn" in the ordinary sense. But I think it would come to you by degrees—by a sort of miracle, Miss Wangel.

BOLETTA.

That is a strange idea.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*After a pause.*] Have you thought much—I mean—have you thought at all deeply and seriously about marriage, Miss Wangel?

BOLETTA.

[*Glances at him.*] About——? No.

LYNGSTRAND.

I have.

BOLETTA.

Indeed; have you?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes. I very often think about things of that sort; and particularly about marriage. And then I have read a good deal on the subject too. I think marriage may be counted a sort of miracle, the woman is transformed, as it were, by degrees and comes to resemble her husband.

BOLETTA.

Acquires his interests, you mean?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, that's just it!

BOLETTA.

Well, but what about his abilities?—his talent and skill?

LYNGSTRAND.

H'm—well—I wonder whether they, too, wouldn't——

BOLETTA.

Then do you think that what a man has mastered by reading—or by his own thought—can be passed on in this way to his wife?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, that too; by degrees; as if by a miracle. But of course I know that this could only happen in a marriage that is faithful, and loving, and really happy.

BOLETTA.

Has it never occurred to you that perhaps a husband

BOLETTA.

Every man?

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh no. I was thinking mainly of artists.

BOLETTA.

Do you think it right for an artist to marry?

LYNGSTRAND.

Most certainly; if he can find some one he really loves——

BOLETTA.

Even then it seems to me that he should rather live for his art alone.

LYNGSTRAND.

Of course he must; but he can quite well do that even if he marries.

BOLETTA.

But what about her, then?

LYNGSTRAND.

Her? Who——?

BOLETTA.

The woman he marries. What is she to live for?

LYNGSTRAND.

She too must live for his art. I should think that must be such happiness for a woman.

can help him to create,—that
by being ever at his side, and
life thoroughly comfortable
that must be such a delight f

BOLET

Oh, you don't realise how

LYNGST

Am *I* selfish? Good heav
knew me a little better——
her.] Miss Wangel,—when I
soon——

BOLE

[*Looks at him sympathetic*
melancholy thoughts into you

LYNGST

I don't see that it is so very

LYNGSTRAND.

I shall be starting in about a month, first for home, and soon afterwards for the South.

BOLETTA.

Oh, I see. Yes, yes.

LYNGSTRAND.

Will you think of me now and then, Miss Wangel?

BOLETTA.

Yes, gladly.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Joyfully.*] Oh, do you promise me that?

BOLETTA.

Yes, I promise.

LYNGSTRAND.

Solemnly, Miss Boletta?

BOLETTA.

Solemnly. [*Changing her tone.*] Oh, but what is the use of all this? Nothing can ever come of it.

LYNGSTRAND.

How can you say that? It would be such a joy to me to know that you were at home here thinking of me.

BOLETTA.

Yes, but what more?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, I am not quite certain about anything more——

BOLETTA.

Nor I. So many things stand in the way; every possible thing stands in the way, it seems to me.

LYNGSTRAND.

Oh, some miracle or other might happen. A happy turn of fate—or something of that sort. For I am convinced that fortune is on my side.

BOLETTA.

[*With animation.*] Yes, that is right! Surely you think so!

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I am perfectly convinced of it. And then—in a few years—when I come home again a famous sculptor, with plenty of money, and as well as possible——

BOLETTA.

Yes, yes; let us hope you will.

LYNGSTRAND.

You may be quite sure of it—if only you think faithfully and warmly of me while I am away in the South. And that you have promised to do.

BOLETTA.

Yes, I have. [*Shakes her head.*] But nothing will ever come of this, all the same.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, Miss Boletta, this at least will come of it, that I shall make the easier and quicker progress with my group.

BOLETTA.

Do you think so?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I feel it within me. And I think it will be stimulating for you too,—here in this out-of-the-way place—to know that you are, as it were, helping me to create.

BOLETTA.

[*Looks at him.*] Well—but you, on your side?

LYNGSTRAND.

I——?

BOLETTA.

[*Looks out towards the garden.*] Hush! Let us talk of something else; here comes Mr. Arnholm.

[ARNHOLM *is seen in the garden, on the left. He stops and speaks to* BALLESTED *and* HILDA.

LYNGSTRAND.

Are you fond of your old teacher, Miss Boletta?

BOLETTA.

Am I fond of him?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I mean do you like him?

BOLETTA.

Oh yes, I do indeed; he is such a good friend and adviser. And he is always so ready to help you whenever he can.

LYNGSTRAND.

Is it not strange that he has never married?

BOLETTA.

Do you think it so strange?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes; they say he is well off.

BOLETTA.

I suppose he is. But it may not have been very easy for him to find any one who would have him.

LYNGSTRAND.

Why?

BOLETTA.

Oh, he has been the teacher of nearly every girl he knows. He says so himself.

LYNGSTRAND.

But what does t h a t matter?

BOLETTA.

Why, of course, one doesn't marry a man who has been one's teacher!

LYNGSTRAND.

Don't you think a girl could possibly love her teacher?

BOLETTA.

Not after she is quite grown up.

LYNGSTRAND.

Dear me! How odd!

BOLETTA.

[*Warningly.*] Hush, hush!

BALLESTED, *who has meanwhile collected his things, carries them out through the garden to the right.* HILDA *helps him.* ARNHOLM *comes up into the veranda and enters the room.*

ARNHOLM.

Good morning, my dear Boletta. Good morning, Mr.—— Mr.——h'm!

[*He looks annoyed, and nods coldly to* LYNGSTRAND, *who rises and bows.*

BOLETTA.

[*Rises and goes to* ARNHOLM.] Good morning, Mr. Arnholm

ARNHOLM.

How are you all here to-day?

BOLETTA.

Thanks, very well.

ARNHOLM.

Has your step-mother gone to bathe to-day again?

BOLETTA.

No, she is up in her room.

ARNHOLM.

Not quite well?

BOLETTA.

I don't know. She has locked herself in.

ARNHOLM.

H'm—has she?

LYNGSTRAND.

Mrs. Wangel seemed very much upset about that Amer-

ARNHOLM.

Yes, pretty late. We had an important question to discuss.

BOLETTA.

Did you get in a word with him about me and my affairs?

ARNHOLM.

No, my dear Boletta. I could not manage it; he was so absorbed in something else.

BOLETTA.

[*Sighs.*] Ah yes,—he always is.

ARNHOLM.

[*Looking significantly at her.*] But remember, you and I are to have another talk about these things, presently.—Where is your father now? Has he gone out?

BOLETTA.

I think he must be down at the surgery. I'll go and fetch him.

ARNHOLM.

No thank you, don't do that. I would rather go down to him.

BOLETTA.

[*Listening to the left.*] Wait a moment, Mr. Arnholm. I think I hear father coming downstairs. Yes. He must have been up attending to her.

DR. WANGEL *enters by the door on the left.*

WANGEL.

[*Holds out his hand to* ARNHOLM.] Ah, my dear friend, are you here already? It's good of you to come so early; there are still several things I want to discuss with you.

BOLETTA.

[*To* LYNGSTRAND.] Shall we join Hilda in the garden for a little whle?

LYNGSTRAND.

With all the pleasure in life, Miss Wangel.

[*He and* BOLETTA *go down into the garden, and out among the trees in the background.*

ARNHOLM.

[*Who has been following them with his eyes, turns to* WANGEL.] Do you know much about that young man?

WANGEL.

Yes, no doubt you are right. But, bless my soul, what is a poor fellow to do? The girls have got so accustomed to look after themselves; they will not listen to a word, either from me or from Ellida.

ARNHOLM.

Not even from her?

WANGEL.

No. And besides, I cannot expect her to interfere in such matters; it is not at all in her way. [*Breaking off.*] But that was not what we were going to talk about. Tell me—have you given any more thought to it?—to all that I told you last night?

ARNHOLM.

I have thought of nothing else, ever since we parted.

WANGEL.

And what do you think I ought to do in the matter?

ARNHOLM.

My dear Doctor, I think that you, as a physician, ought to know better than I.

WANGEL.

Oh, if you only knew how difficult it is for a physician to form a valid judgment in the case of a patient he loves so dearly! And this is no common disorder either—no case for an ordinary physician, or for ordinary remedies.

ARNHOLM.

How is she to-day?

WANGEL.

I have just been up to see her, and she appeared to me quite calm. But behind all her moods something seems to be hidden that eludes me entirely. And then she is so variable—so incalculable—so subject to sudden changes.

ARNHOLM.

No doubt that is due to her morbid state of mind.

WANGEL.

Not entirely. The germ of it all is innate in her. Ellida belongs to the sea-folk; that is the trouble.

ARNHOLM.

WANGEL.

Yes, more and more; but I ought to have known it from the first. Oh, I did really know it then too, but I would not acknowledge it to myself. I loved her so much, you see! And consequently I thought first of myself. In fact, I was utterly and unpardonably selfish.

ARNHOLM.

H'm,—I am afraid every man is a trifle selfish under those circumstances. But I can't say that I have noticed that vice in you, Dr. Wangel.

WANGEL.

[*Wandering uneasily up and down.*] Oh yes! And I have been so since, as well. I am so much, much older than she; I ought to have been to her like a father and a guide in one. I ought to have done my best to develop and clarify her intelligence. But unfortunately I have done nothing of the sort. I have not had energy enough, you see! And in fact I preferred to have her just as she was. But then she grew worse and worse, and I was at my wits' end to know what to do. [*Lower.*] That is why I turned to you in my perplexity, and asked you to come to us.

ARNHOLM.

[*Looks at him in astonishment.*] What! Was that why you wrote to me?

WANGEL.

Yes; but don't say anything about it.

that she still had a secret feani
thought it might perhaps do l
and have a talk with you abou

ARNHO

Then it was your wife you r
some one here was waiting a
for me!

WANG

Yes; who else?

ARNHC

[*Quickly.*] Of course, of c
derstand you.

WANG

Naturally not, as I said bel
wrong scent.

ARNHC

And you call yourself selfisl

WANG

Oh, I had such a great o

ARNHOLM.

What do you take to be the real explanation o power this stranger exercises over her?

WANGEL.

H'm, my dear friend—there may be sides to question that don't admit of explanation.

ARNHOLM.

Something inexplicable in itself, do you mean? tirely inexplicable?

WANGEL.

Inexplicable for the present, at any rate.

ARNHOLM.

Do you believe in such things?

WANGEL.

I neither believe nor disbelieve. I simply do not l So I suspend my judgment.

ARNHOLM.

But tell me one thing: that strange, uncanny id hers about the child's eyes——

WANGEL.

[*Eagerly.*] I don't in the least believe that abo eyes! I w i l l not believe any such thing! It m pure imagination on her part; nothing else.

ARNHOLM.

Did you notice the man's eyes when you saw him yesterday?

WANGEL.

Yes, certainly I did.

ARNHOLM.

And you found no sort of likeness?

WANGEL.

[*Evasively.*] H'm—upon my soul I don't know what to say. It was not quite light when I saw him; and besides, Ellida had talked so much about this likeness beforehand—I don't think it was possible for me to observe him without any bias.

ARNHOLM.

ARNHOLM.

And did it not?

WANGEL.

Not at all. There had been unmistakable symptoms of it long before that.—It is true she happened—by chance—to have a rather severe attack precisely in the month of March, three years ago——

ARNHOLM.

Well then——!

WANGEL.

Oh, but that is quite easily accounted for by the circumstances—the condition—she happened to be in at that time.

ARNHOLM.

The indications may be read in either way, then.

WANGEL.

[*Wringing his hands.*] And to be powerless to help her! To be at the end of one's resources! To see no sort of remedy——!

ARNHOLM.

What if you made up your mind to a change of residence—to move to some other place, where she might live under conditions that seemed to her more home-like?

WANGEL.

My dear fellow, do you think I haven't suggested t h a t to her? I proposed that we should move out to Skioldvik. But she will not.

ARNHOLM.

Not that either?

WANGEL.

No. She thinks it would be useless; and I daresay she is right too

ARNHOLM.

H'm—do you think so?

WANGEL.

Yes; and besides—on considering the matter more closely—I really don't see how I could manage it. I scarcely think I should be justified, on the girls' account, in moving to such an out-of-the-way corner. After all, they must live where there is at least s o m e chance of their one day being able to marry.

ARNHOLM.

WANGEL.

[*Beside the piano.*] Oh I should be so glad to make any possible sacrifice—for all three of them.—If only I knew what!

ELLIDA *enters by the door on the left.*

ELLIDA.

[*Rapidly to* WANGEL.] Be sure you do not go out this morning.

WANGEL.

No no, certainly not; I will stay at home with you. [*Points to* ARNHOLM, *who approaches.*] But you haven't said good morning to our friend?

ELLIDA.

[*Turns.*] Oh, are you there, Mr. Arnholm? [*Holds out her hand.*] Good morning.

ARNHOLM.

Good morning, Mrs. Wangel. You have not gone for your bathe to-day as usual?

ELLIDA.

No, no, no! I couldn't think of it to-day. Won't you sit down for a moment?

ARNHOLM.

No thank you—not just now. [*Looks at* WANGEL.] I promised the girls I would join them in the garden.

ARNHOL

I daresay I shall find them.
[*He nods and passes across den, and out to the right.*

ELLIDA.

What o'clock is it, Wangel?

WANGEL.

[*Looks at his watch.*] It's a li

ELLIDA.

A little past; and at eleven o steamer will be here. Oh, if it o

WANGEL.

[*Goes closer to her.*] Dear Elli should like to ask you about.

WANGEL.

The night before last—up at the Prospect—you said that during the past three years you had often seen him bodily before you.

ELLIDA.

So I have. I assure you I have.

WANGEL.

Well, but how did you see him?

ELLIDA.

How did I see him?

WANGEL.

I mean—what did he look like when you appeared to see him before you?

ELLIDA.

Why, my dear Wangel,—you know yourself now what he looks like.

WANGEL.

And he looked like that when you seemed to see him?

ELLIDA.

Yes, he did.

WANGEL.

Exactly as you saw him in reality last evening?

ELLIDA.

Yes, exactly.

No. You yourself told me aft
did not in the least know who th

ELLIDA.

[*Impressed.*] Yes, I really beli
not that strange, Wangel? Thi
him at once!

WANGEL.

It was only by his eyes, you s

ELLIDA.

Oh yes—his eyes! His eyes!

WANGEL.

Well, but up at the Prospect y
ways appeared to you just as he
ten years ago.

ELLIDA.

Did I say that?

ELLIDA.

Then he must have looked at that time much as he does now.

WANGEL.

No. You gave quite another description of him on the way home, the night before last. Ten years ago he had no beard, you said. He was quite differently dressed too. And the breast-pin with the pearl in it——? He wore nothing of the sort yesterday.

ELLIDA.

No, he didn't.

WANGEL.

[*Looks intently at her.*] Now think a little, dear Ellida. Perhaps you cannot remember now what he looked like when you parted from him at Bratthammer?

ELLIDA.

[*Reflectively, closing her eyes for a moment.*] Not quite distinctly. No—I can't at all to-day. Isn't that strange?

WANGEL.

Not so very strange. A new and real figure has presented itself to you, and that obscures the old one—so that you can no longer see it.

ELLIDA.

Do you think so, Wangel?

Yes; its coming—ma

[*Seats herself on the s*
by me. I must tell yo

Yes do, dear Ellida.
[*He seats himself*
table.

It was really a great
we two, of all people, s

[*Starts.*] What do yc

WANGEL.

Why, what was wrong with the way——?

ELLIDA.

Listen now, Wangel,—it is useless for us to go on any longer lying to ourselves—and to each other.

WANGEL.

A r e we doing so? Lying do you say?

ELLIDA.

Yes, lying. Or at any rate—concealing the truth. The truth—the sheer unvarnished truth is t h i s: you came out there and—bought me.

WANGEL.

Bought—— Did you say—bought?

ELLIDA.

Oh, I was not a bit better than you. I joined in the bargain. I went and sold myself to you.

WANGEL.

[*Looks at her, deeply pained.*] Ellida,—have you the heart to say so?

ELLIDA.

Why, what else can you call it? You could not bear the void in your house; you looked about for a new wife——

spoken with me once or
me, and so——

Well, you may give it

And I, for my part—
forlorn, and utterly alone
I should accept the barg
to maintain me all my li

I assure you I did not
Ellida. I asked you ho
me and the children the

Yes, you did. But

WANGEL.

[*Rising.*] Then have the five or six years we have lived together been utterly wasted for you?

ELLIDA.

Oh, you must not think that, Wangel! I have had all from you that any one could possibly desire. But I did not come into your home of my own free will,—that is the thing.

WANGEL.

[*Looks at her.*] Not of your free will?

ELLIDA.

No; it was not of my own free will that I cast in my lot with yours.

WANGEL.

[*Softly.*] Ah, I remember—the phrase he used yesterday.

ELLIDA.

The whole secret lies in that phrase. It has thrown a new light on things for me; so that I see it all now.

WANGEL.

What do you see?

ELLIDA.

I see that the life we two lead with each other—is really no marriage at all.

WANGEL.

[*Bitterly.*] There you are right. The life we now lead is no marriage at all.

ELLIDA.

Nor the life we led before; never; not from the outset. [*Looks straight before her.*] The first—that might have been a real and true marriage.

WANGEL.

The first? What "first" do you mean?

ELLIDA.

Mine,—with him.

WANGEL.

[*Looks at her in astonishment.*] I cannot understand you at all!

ELLIDA.

[*Rises impetuously.*] Let me leave you, Wangel!

WANGEL.

Ellida——! Ellida——!

ELLIDA.

Yes, yes—you must let me! I can assure you there will be nothing else for it in the end—after the way we two came together.

WANGEL.

[*Controlling his emotion.*] So it has come to this!

ELLIDA.

It h a d to come to this; no other end was possible.

WANGEL.

[*Looks sorrowfully at her.*] So even in our daily life together I have not won you. You have never, never been wholly mine.

ELLIDA.

Oh Wangel—if only I could love you as I gladly would! As tenderly as you deserve! But I feel quite clearly—it will never be.

WANGEL.

A divorce then? It is a divorce,—a formal, legal divorce,—that you want?

WANGEL.

[*Bitterly, nods slowly.*] To can

ELLIDA.

[*Eagerly.*] Precisely! To canc

WANGEL.

And after that, Ellida? Af
thought of the outlook for both of
our lives take—both yours and m

ELLIDA.

We must not let that influence
shape itself as best it can. This
you, Wangel,—this is the chief
Give me back my full freedom!

WANGEL.

Ellida—this is a terrible deman
Let me at least have time to colle

ELLIDA.

But there is no time to waste on all that. You must give me back my freedom this very day.

WANGEL.

Why to-day?

ELLIDA.

Because it is to-night that he is coming.

WANGEL.

[*Starts.*] Coming! He! What has the stranger to do with this?

ELLIDA.

I want to meet him in full freedom.

WANGEL.

And what—what do you intend to do then?

ELLIDA.

I do not want to take refuge in the plea that I am another man's wife—or that I have no choice left me. For then my decision would decide nothing.

WANGEL.

You talk of choice! Choice, Ellida! Choice in this matter!

ELLIDA.

Yes, choose I must—freely choose either course. I must be free to let him go away alone—or—to go with him.

WANGE

That may be. But he! H
man you know so little about!

ELLIDA

I knew perhaps even less of
you.

WANGE

At least you knew pretty w
were entering upon. But now
do you know now? Nothing w
is—or what he is.

ELLIDA

[*Looking straight before her.*]
is just the terrible thing.

WANGE

Yes, terrible indeed——

WANGEL.

[*Looks at her.*] Because it seems to you terrible?

ELLIDA.

Yes, just because of that.

WANGEL.

[*Nearer.*] Tell me, Ellida—what do you really mean by "terrible"?

ELLIDA.

[*Reflects.*] I call a thing terrible—when it both frightens and fascinates me.

WANGEL.

Fascinates?

ELLIDA.

Most of all when it fascinates me—I think.

WANGEL.

[*Slowly.*] You are akin to the sea.

ELLIDA.

There is terror in that too.

WANGEL.

And in yourself no less. You both frighten and fascinate.[1]

[1] For another rendering of the foregoing very difficult passage —especially difficult because of the frequent occurrence of "det grufulde" "the terrible" in other contexts—the reader who is curious in such matters may consult the five-volume edition of Ibsen's *Prose Dramas* (vol. v. p. 210), where he will find it discussed in a footnote.

ELLIDA.

Do you think so, Wangel?

WANGEL.

I see that I have never really known you; never thoroughly. I am beginning to understand that now.

ELLIDA.

And therefore you must set me free! Loose me from every tie to you and yours! I am not the woman you took me for; you see that now yourself. Now we can part in mutual understanding—and of our own free will.

WANGEL.

[*Gloomily.*] It would perhaps be best for us both—to part. But for all that, I c a n n o t! To me it is you that are "terrible," Ellida. And fascinating—that you

thing is—the fascination I feel in my own mind; and what can you do against that?

WANGEL.

I can strengthen and support you in resisting it.

ELLIDA.

Yes—if I had the w i l l to resist it.

WANGEL.

Have you not the will?

ELLIDA.

Oh, that is just what I don't know!

WANGEL.

To-night all will be decided, dear Ellida——

ELLIDA.

[*Breaks out.*] Yes, think of it——! The decision so near! The decision for all time!

WANGEL.

——and then to-morrow——

ELLIDA.

Yes, to-morrow! Perhaps I shall have forfeited my true future!

WANGEL.

Your true——?

Do I——? Oh how
me he is terrible, and t

——and that——?

[*Tears herself away.*]
my place were with him

[*Bows his head.*] I b

And what help, what

\

ELLIDA.

Oh Wangel——! To-morrow—it will be too late——!

WANGEL.

[*Looks out towards the garden.*] The children! The children——! Let us at least spare them—for the present.

ARNHOLM, BOLETTA, HILDA, *and* LYNGSTRAND *appear in the garden.* LYNGSTRAND *takes leave without entering the house, and goes to the left. The others come into the room.*

ARNHOLM.

Ah, I can tell you we have been laying great plans——

HILDA.

We want to go out on the fiord this evening, and——

BOLETTA.

No, no, don't tell!

WANGEL.

We two have also been laying plans.

ARNHOLM.

Ah—really?

WANGEL.

To-morrow Ellida is going to Skioldvik—for a time.

BOLETTA.

Going away——?

ARNHOLM.

That is very wise, Mrs. Wangel.

WANGEL.

Ellida wants to go home again; home to the sea.

HILDA.

[*With a little rush towards* ELLIDA.] Are you going away? Going away from us!

ELLIDA.

[*Startled.*] Why, Hilda! What is the matter with you?

HILDA.

[*Restraining herself.*] Oh, nothing at all. [*In a low tone, turning from her.*] Go by all means!

BOLETTA.

——now and then, I suppose.

WANGEL.

My dear child, it m u s t be so. [*He walks away.*

ARNHOLM.

[*Whispers.*] I have something to say to you by-and-by, Boletta.

[*He goes over to* WANGEL. *They converse in a low tone by the door.*

ELLIDA.

[*Softly to* BOLETTA.] What was the matter with Hilda? She seemed quite beside herself!

BOLETTA.

Have you never seen what Hilda has been thirsting for, day after day?

ELLIDA.

Thirsting for?

BOLETTA.

Ever since you came into the house!

ELLIDA.

No, no,—what is it?

BOLETTA.

One word of affection from you.

ELLIDA.

Ah——! What if there were work for me to do h e r e!

[She clasps her hands above her head and looks immovably before her, as if a prey to conflicting thoughts and moods.

*[*WANGEL *and* ARNHOLM *come forward conversing in whispers.*

*[*BOLETTA *goes and looks into the side room on the right. Then she throws the door wide open.*

BOLETTA.

Well, father dear—dinner is on the table,——

WANGEL.

[With forced composure.] Is it, child? That's right. Come along, Arnholm! We will drink a parting cup with—with "the lady from the sea."

[They go towards the door on the right.

ACT FIFTH

The remote corner of DR. WANGEL'S *garden, by the carp-pond. Deepening summer twilight.*

ARNHOLM, BOLETTA, LYNGSTRAND, *and* HILDA, *in a boat on the fiord, are punting along the shore from the left.*

HILDA.

Look, we can easily jump ashore here!

ARNHOLM.

No no, don't do it!

LYNGSTRAND.

I can't jump, Miss Hilda.

HILDA.

Can't you jump either, Mr. Arnholm?

ARNHOLM.

I would rather not.

BOLETTA.

Let us land at the bathing-house steps.

[*They punt the boat out to the right.*

At that moment BALLESTED *appears from the right, on the footpath, carrying music and a French horn. He greets those in the boat, turns, and talks to them. Their answers are heard farther and farther off.*

BALLESTED.

What do you say?—Yes of course it's in honour of the English steamer. It's her last trip this year. But if you want to enjoy the music you mustn't put off too long. [*Calls out.*] What? [*Shakes his head.*] Can't hear what you say!

[ELLIDA, *with a shawl over her head, comes in from the left, followed by* DR. WANGEL.

WANGEL.

But, my dear Ellida, I assure you there is ample time.

ELLIDA.

No, no,—there is not! He may come at any moment.

BALLESTED.

[*Outside, by the garden fence.*] Ah, good evening, Doctor! Good evening, Mrs. Wangel!

WANGEL.

[*Notices him.*] Oh, are you there? Is there to be music to-night again?

BALLESTED.

Yes. The Musical Society proposes to show what it can do. There's no lack of festive occasions at this season. To-night it's in honour of the Englishman.

ELLIDA.

The English steamer! Is it in sight already?

BALLESTED.

Not yet; but you see it comes down the fiord among the islands. It is on you before you know where you are.

ELLIDA.

Yes,—that is true.

WANGEL.

[*Partly to* ELLIDA.] This is the last trip. After to-night we shall see no more of it.

BALLESTED.

A melancholy thought, Doctor. But that's why we are turning out in its honour, as I said before. Ah yes, ah yes! The happy summer time is drawing to a close "Soon will all the straits be ice-bound," as they say in the tragedy.[1]

ELLIDA.

All the straits ice-bound,—yes.

BALLESTED.

Mournful reflection! For weeks and months now we have been joyful children of the summer; it is hard to reconcile oneself to the dark days. At first, that is to say; for people c a n alcli—ac—climatise themselves, Mrs. Wangel. Yes they can indeed.

[*He bows and goes out to the left.*

ELLIDA.

[*Looks out across the fiord.*] Oh this torturing suspense! This intolerable last half-hour before the decision!

[1] "Snart er alle sunde lukket."—Oehlenschläger's *Hakon Jarl.*

WANGEL.

Then you are still bent on speaking with him yourself?

ELLIDA.

I m u s t speak with him myself; for I must make my choice of my own free will.

WANGEL.

You have no choice, Ellida. You cannot be allowed to choose—*I* will not allow you.

ELLIDA.

You can never prevent my choosing; neither you nor any one else. You can forbid me to go away with him—to cast in my lot with him—if I should choose that. You can forcibly detain me here, against my will. That you can do. But the choice in my innermost soul—my choice of him and not of you—in case I should and must choose

leave behind me, about anything in the world. You see how utterly without root I am in your house; how I have stood entirely outside of everything from the very first moment.

WANGEL.

You yourself willed it so.

ELLIDA.

No, I did not. I had no will one way or the other. I have merely let everything remain as I found it the day I came. It is you—and no one else—who have willed it so.

WANGEL.

I meant to do what was best for you.

ELLIDA

Oh yes, Wangel, I know that so well! But now all this must be paid for; it will have its revenge. There is nothing here now that has any binding power over me—nothing to support—nothing to help me. There is no counter-fascination for me in what should have been the dearest treasure of our common life.

WANGEL.

I see that well enough, Ellida; and so from to-morrow you shall have your freedom again. Hereafter you shall live your own life.

ELLIDA.

You call that my own life! Oh no, my own true life slid into a wrong groove when I joined it to yours.

[*Clenches her hands together in fear and agitation.*] And now—to-night—in half an hour—the man I have forsaken will be here—the man to whom my faith should have been inviolable, as his has been to me! Now he is coming to offer me—for the last and only time—a chance of beginning life afresh—of living my own real life—the life that at once frightens and fascinates me—and that I c a n n o t forego. Not of my own free will!

WANGEL.

That is just why you require your husband—and your physician also—to take the power out of your hands, and to act on your behalf.

ELLIDA.

Yes, Wangel, I understand that very well. Oh, there are times, you may be sure, when I feel as though there would be safety and peace in clinging close to you, and trying to defy all the powers that frighten and fascinate

WANGEL.

Ample time, I assure you.

ELLIDA.

Let us walk a little then.

[*They go out in front, to the right. At the same moment* ARNHOLM *and* BOLETTA *appear by the upper bank of the pond.*

BOLETTA.

[*Catching sight of the retreating figures.*] Look there——!

ARNHOLM.

[*Softly.*] Hush! Let them go.

BOLETTA.

Can you understand what has been passing between them these last few days?

ARNHOLM.

Have you noticed anything?

BOLETTA.

H a v e I noticed——!

ARNHOLM.

Anything particular?

BOLETTA.

Oh yes; many things. Have you not?

ARNHOLM.

Well, I don't quite know——

BOLETTA.

Yes, I am sure you have; only you won't admit it.

ARNHOLM.

I think it will do your stepmother good to take this little trip.

BOLETTA.

Do you?

ARNHOLM.

Yes; I fancy it would be a good thing for every one if she were to get away a little now and then.

BOLETTA.

If she goes home to Skioldvik to-morrow, she will certainly never come back again.

ARNHOLM.

Why, my dear Boletta, what have you got into your head?

BOLETTA.

I am perfectly convinced of it. Just you wait! You shall see—she won't return. Not while Hilda and I are at home, at any rate.

ARNHOLM.

Hilda too?

BOLETTA.

Well, perhaps Hilda might not matter so much. She is hardly more than a child yet; and I believe in her heart she worships Ellida. But with me it is different, you see; a stepmother who is not so very much older than oneself——

ARNHOLM.

My dear Boletta—you may not have so very long to wait before leaving home.

BOLETTA.

[*Eagerly.*] Do you think so? Have you spoken to father about it?

ARNHOLM.

Yes, I have done that too.

BOLETTA.

Well—and what did he say?

ARNHOLM.

H'm—your father is so absorbed in other thoughts just now——

BOLETTA.

Yes, yes, that is just what I told you.

ARNHOLM.

But so much I ascertained from him, that you must not count upon any help from that quarter.

BOLETTA.

Not——?

ARNHOLM.

He put his position quite clearly before me, and showed that anything of the kind was a sheer impossibility for him.

BOLETTA.

[*Reproachfully.*] Then how could you have the heart to stand there and make game of me?

ARNHOLM.

Indeed I did not, dear Boletta. It depends entirely upon yourself whether you will leave home or not.

BOLETTA.

Depends upon me, you say?

ARNHOLM.

Whether you will go out into the world and learn all that your heart desires. Whether you will take part in all that, at home here, you so long for. Whether you will live your life under happier conditions, Boletta. What do you say?

BOLETTA.

[*Clasping her hands.*] Oh how glorious——! But all this is utterly impossible. If father neither will nor can—— There is no one else in the whole world that I can turn to.

ARNHOLM.

Could you not let your old—your former tutor come to your aid?

BOLETTA.

You, Mr. Arnholm? Would you really——?

ARNHOLM.

Stand by you? Yes, with the greatest of pleasure, both in word and deed; that you may rely upon. Do you accept my offer then? Tell me! Do you consent?

BOLETTA.

Do I consent! To leave home—to see the world—to learn something really worth knowing—to do everything that has seemed to me most delightful and impossible——?

ARNHOLM.

Yes, all this is now within your reach, if only you will.

BOLETTA.

And you will help me to this unspeakable happiness. Oh—but tell me—c a n I accept so great a gift from a stranger?

ARNHOLM.

You can quite well accept it from me, Boletta. From me you may accept anything.

BOLETTA.

[*Seizes his hands.*] Yes, I really think I may. I don't know how it is, but—— [*With an outburst of emotion.*]

Oh—I could both laugh and cry for joy!—for sheer happiness! Oh—to think that I shall learn what life is, after all; I was beginning to be so afraid that it would slip away from me.

ARNHOLM.

You need not be afraid of that, dear Boletta. But now you must tell me quite frankly whether there is anything —any tie that binds you here?

BOLETTA.

Any tie? No, none.

ARNHOLM.

None at all?

BOLETTA.

No, none whatever. That is,—of course father is a tie —in a way. And Hilda too. But——

ARNHOLM.

Well—your father you will have to leave sooner or later; and Hilda too will one day take her own path in life; that is only a question of time. But otherwise there is nothing to bind you, Boletta? No engagement of any sort?

BOLETTA.

No, nothing of the kind. So far as that is concerned, I can quite well go wherever I please.

ARNHOLM.

Well then, if that is the case, my dear Boletta—you shall come away with me.

BOLETTA.

[*Claps her hands.*] Oh great heavens—what a joy to think of.

ARNHOLM.

I hope you have full confidence in me?

BOLETTA.

Yes, indeed I have.

ARNHOLM.

And you can place yourself and your future fully and fearlessly in my hands, Boletta? You feel you can, do you not?

BOLETTA.

Oh yes, certainly! Why should I not? Can you doubt it? You, my old tutor—my tutor in the old days, I mean.

ARNHOLM.

Not only because of that. I do not lay so much stress on that side of the matter. But—well—since you are free then, Boletta—since there is no tie that binds you,—I ask you—if you would be willing—willing to unite yourself to me—for life?

BOLETTA.

[*Starts back in fear.*] Oh—what are you saying?

ARNHOLM.

For your whole life, Boletta. Will you be my wife?

You surely cannot m
Arnholm? [*Looks at him*
this what you had in min
do so much for me?

A

Now you must listen
pears I have taken you q

B

Oh, how could such a
it fail to—to surprise me

A

No doubt you are right.
—you could not know, th
here just now.

B

Did you come here for-

lieve—h'm—that you had kept your former tutor in—in a little more than friendly remembrance.

BOLETTA.

How could father say such a thing?

ARNHOLM.

It appears that was not what he meant at all. But in the meantime I had accustomed myself to the thought that here was a young girl waiting and longing for me to come again.—No, you mustn't interrupt me, dear Boletta! And, you see,—when a man, like myself, is no longer in the first flush of youth, such a belief—or illusion—makes an exceedingly strong impression. A vivid —a grateful affection for you grew up within me. I felt I must come to you; see you again; tell you that I shared the feelings which I imagined you entertained for me.

BOLETTA.

But now, when you know that it was not so! That it was a mistake!

ARNHOLM.

That makes no difference, Boletta. Your image—as it dwells in my heart—will always remain coloured and thrown into relief by the feeling that mistake aroused in me. Perhaps you cannot understand this; but so it is.

BOLETTA.

I never dreamed that anything of the kind was possible.

ARNHOLM.

But now that you see it is——? What do you say, Boletta? Can you not make up your mind to—to be my wife?

BOLETTA.

Oh, it seems so utterly impossible, Mr. Arnholm. You, who have been my teacher! I cannot imagine myself standing in any other kind of relation to you.

ARNHOLM.

Well, well—if you feel absolutely sure that you cannot—then the relation between us remains unaltered, my dear Boletta.

BOLETTA.

How do you mean?

ARNHOLM.

Of course I stand to my proposition, none the less. I

BOLETTA.

Yes, surely you can see it is! After what you have said to me—and after the answer I have given you——. Oh, you must surely understand that I cannot accept such great favours from you! I can accept nothing in the world from you; never after this!

ARNHOLM.

Then would you rather stay at home here and let life slip away from you?

BOLETTA.

Oh, it is torture to think of it!

ARNHOLM.

Will you renounce all hope of seeing something of the outer world? Renounce your chance of taking part in all that you say you are thirsting for? Can you know that life has such infinite possibilities—and yet be content to realise no single one of them? Think well, Boletta.

BOLETTA.

Yes, yes—you are quite right, Mr. Arnholm.

ARNHOLM.

And then—when your father is no longer with you—you might find yourself helpless and alone in the world. Or you might have to give yourself to another man—whom you—possibly—might not be able to care for, any more than for me.

BOLETTA.

Oh yes,—I see quite well how true it is—all that you say. But still—!——Or perhaps, after all——

ARNHOLM.

[*Quickly.*] Well!

BOLETTA.

[*Looks at him, undecided.*] Perhaps it might not be utterly impossible after all——

ARNHOLM.

What, Boletta?

BOLETTA.

That I might—perhaps agree to—what—what you proposed to me.

ARNHOLM.

Do you mean that perhaps you might——? That at least you would grant me the happiness of coming to your aid as a faithful friend?

BOLETTA.

No, no, no! Never that! That would be absolutely impossible now. No—Mr. Arnholm—I had rather you should take me——

ARNHOLM.

Boletta! Will you——!

BOLETTA.

Yes,—I think—I will.

ARNHOLM.

You will be my wife?

BOLETTA.

Yes; if you still think you—ought to take me.

ARNHOLM.

If I think——! [*Seizes her hand.*] Oh thanks, thanks, Boletta! What you have been saying—your hesitation at first—that does not alarm me. If I do not fully possess your heart as yet, I shall know how to win it. Oh Boletta, how I will treasure you!

BOLETTA.

And I am to see the world; to take part in its life; you have promised me that.

ARNHOLM.

And I hold to it.

BOLETTA.

And I am to learn everything I want to.

ARNHOLM.

I myself will be your teacher, as in the old days, Boletta. Think of the last year you were my pupil——

BOLETTA.

[*In quiet self-absorption.*] Fancy,—to know oneself free—to go out into the unknown world! And then to have no care for the future; no constant fears about miserable money——

ARNHOLM.

No, you shall never have to waste a thought on such things. And, my dear Boletta, that is a good thing too, in its way—isn't it now?

BOLETTA.

Yes, it is indeed. I know it is.

ARNHOLM.

[*Putting his arm round her waist.*] Oh you shall see how cosily and comfortably we will arrange our life! And what peace and confidence there will be between us, Boletta!

BOLETTA.

Yes, I begin to——. I really think—that we ought to get on together. [*Looks out to the right, and hurriedly disengages herself.*] Ah! Please don't say anything about it!

ARNHOLM.

What is the matter, dear?

BOLETTA.

Oh, it's that poor—— [*Points.*] Over there.

ARNHOLM.

Is it your father——?

BOLETTA.

No, it's the young sculptor. He is walking over there with Hilda.

ARNHOLM.

Oh, Lyngstrand. Why should you trouble about him?

BOLETTA.

Oh you know how delicate and ill he is.

ARNHOLM.

Yes, if it isn't all his imagination.

BOLETTA.

No, it is real; he cannot live long. But perhaps it is best for him.

ARNHOLM.

How best for him, my dear?

BOLETTA.

Well because,—because I don't think much would come of his art in any case.—Let us go before they come.

ARNHOLM.

By all means, my dear Boletta.

[HILDA *and* LYNGSTRAND *appear beside the pond.*

HILDA.

Hi! Hi! Won't you condescend to wait for us?

ARNHOLM.

Boletta and I would rather go on ahead.

[*He and* BOLETTA *go out to the left.*

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Laughs quietly.*] It is quite amusing here just now; everybody goes in couples; always two and two together.

HILDA.

[*Looks after them.*] I could almost swear that he is making love to her.

LYNGSTRAND.

Really? Have you seen anything to make you think so?

HILDA.

Oh yes. It's easy to see it—if you keep your eyes about you.

LYNGSTRAND.

But Miss Boletta will not have him. I am sure of that

HILDA.

No. She thinks he looks so frightfully old: and she's afraid he'll soon be bald too.

LYNGSTRAND.

Ah, I don't mean only because of that. She would not have him in any case.

HILDA.

How can you know that?

LYNGSTRAND.

Well, because there is some one else she has promised to keep in her thoughts.

HILDA.

Only to keep in her thoughts?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, while he is away.

HILDA.

Oh, then I suppose it's you she is to keep in her thoughts.

LYNGSTRAND.

Possibly.

HILDA.

Has she promised you that?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, only think—she has promised me that! But please, please don't tell her that you know about it.

HILDA.

Oh, don't be afraid: I am as silent as the grave.

LYNGSTRAND.

I think it is so tremendously kind of her.

HILDA.

And then, when you come home again—is it to be an engagement? Are you going to marry her?

LYNGSTRAND.

No, I scarcely think that would do. You see, marriage is out of the question for me for a few years yet;

and then, when I have made my way, she will be a bit too old for me, I fancy.

HILDA.

And yet you want her to go on thinking of you?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes; for it would help me so much; as an artist, you understand. And she, having no special vocation of her own in life, can so easily do it.—But it is kind of her, all the same.

HILDA.

Do you think, then, that you can get on quicker with your group if you know that Boletta is thinking of you at home here?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I imagine so. You see, the knowledge that somewhere in the world a young, exquisite, silent woman is secretly dreaming of one—I think it must be so—so——. Well, I scarcely know what to call it.

HILDA.

Do you mean—thrilling?

LYNGSTRAND.

Thrilling? Oh yes. It is thrilling I mean; or something of that sort. [*Looks at her a moment.*] You are so bright, Miss Hilda; really you are very bright, you know. When I come home again you will be just about as old as your sister is now. Perhaps you will look as she looks

w; and perhaps you will have grown like her in mind well. Very likely you will be, as it were, both yourf and her—in one body, so to speak.

HILDA.

Would that please you?

LYNGSTRAND.

I don't quite know. Yes, I almost think so. But ow—for this summer—I prefer you to be like yourself one—just exactly as you are.

HILDA.

Do you like me best so?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I like you exceedingly as you are.

HILDA.

H'm,—tell me,—as an artist—do you think I do right always wearing light summer dresses?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, I think you do perfectly right.

HILDA.

Then you think bright colours suit me?

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, charmingly, to my taste.

HILDA.

But tell me—as an artist—how do you think I should look in black?

LYNGSTRAND.

In black, Miss Hilda?

HILDA.

Yes, all in black. Do you think I should look nice?

LYNGSTRAND.

Black is scarcely the thing for the summer-time. But for that matter I am sure you would look extremely well in black too. Yes, you have just the figure for it.

HILDA.

[*Gazing before her.*] In black right up to the neck—a black ruffle—black gloves and a long black veil behind.

LYNGSTRAND.

If you were dressed like that, Miss Hilda, I should long to be a painter—so that I might paint a young, lovely, broken-hearted widow.

HILDA.

Or a young girl mourning for her betrothed.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, that would suit you still better. But you can't wish to dress yourself like that?

HILDA.

I don't know; I think it is thrilling.

LYNGSTRAND.

Thrilling?

HILDA.

Thrilling to think of, yes. [*Points suddenly to the left.*] ı, look t h e r e!

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Looking in the direction indicated.*] The big English amer! And right in at the pier!

WANGEL *and* ELLIDA *appear by the pond.*

WANGEL.

No, I assure you, my dear Ellida, you are mistaken. *es the others.*] What, are you two here? She is not sight yet, is she, Mr. Lyngstrand?

LYNGSTRAND.

The big English boat?

WANGEL.

Yes.

LYNGSTRAND.

[*Pointing.*] There she lies already, Doctor.

ELLIDA.

Ah—! I knew it.

WANGEL.

She is come!

You must take Hilda down to the pier. Make haste! I'm sure she would like to hear the music.

LYNGSTRAND.

Yes, we were just going, Doctor.

WANGEL.

We will perhaps come afterwards. We'll come presently.

HILDA.

[*Whispers to* LYNGSTRAND.] Another pair, you see.

[*She and* LYNGSTRAND *go out through the garden to the left. Distant music of wind instruments is heard out on the fiord during what follows.*

ELLIDA.

He has come! He is here! Yes, yes—I feel it.

WANGEL.

You had better go in, Ellida. Let me see him alone.

THE STRANGER.

ows.] Good evening. I have come again you see,
a.

ELLIDA.

es, yes, yes,—the hour has come.

THE STRANGER.

re you ready to go with me? Or are you not?

WANGEL.

ou can see for yourself that she is not.

THE STRANGER.

was not thinking of travelling-clothes and trunks and
sort of thing. I have on board with me everything
requires for the voyage; and I have taken a cabin for
[*To* ELLIDA.] I ask you, then, if you are ready to
e with me—to come with me of your own free will?

ELLIDA.

mploringly.] Oh, do not ask me! Do not tempt me
[*A steamer bell is heard in the distance.*

THE STRANGER.

here goes the warning bell. Now you must say yes
o.

ELLIDA.

Vrings her hands.] To have to decide! To decide
all time! To do what can never be undone!

THE STRANGER.

Never. In half an hour it will be too late.

ELLIDA.

[*Looks timidly and intently at him.*] What makes you hold to me so persistently?

THE STRANGER.

Do you not feel, as I do, that we two belong to each other?

ELLIDA.

Do you mean because of that promise?

THE STRANGER.

Promises bind no one: neither man nor woman. If I hold to you persistently, it is because I cannot do otherwise.

ELLIDA.

[*Softly and trembling.*] Why did you not come sooner?

WANGEL.

Ellida!

ELLIDA.

[*With an outburst of emotion.*] Oh—what is it that tempts and allures and seems to drag me into the unknown! The whole might of the sea is centred in this one thing! [THE STRANGER *climbs over the garden fence.*

ELLIDA.

[*Shrinks behind* WANGEL.] What is it? What do you want?

THE STRANGER.

see it—I hear it in your voice, Ellida—it is me you choose in the end.

WANGEL.

dvances towards him.] My wife has no choice in matter. I am here to choose for her and—to pro- her. Yes, protect her! If you do not get away n here—out of the country—and never come back— you know what you expose yourself to?

ELLIDA.

Jo, no, Wangel! Not that!

THE STRANGER.

What will you do to me?

WANGEL.

: will have you arrested—as a felon! At once! Be- e you can get on board! I know all about the mur- · out at Skioldvik.

ELLIDA.

Oh Wangel,—how can you——?

THE STRANGER.

I was prepared for that move; and therefore,—[*Takes evolver out of his breast pocket*],—I have provided my- f with this.

ELLIDA.

[*Throws herself before* WANGEL.] No, no—do not kill m! Rather kill me!

THE STRANGER

Neither you nor him; be easy on that score. This is for myself; I will live and die a free man!

ELLIDA.

[*With increasing agitation.*] Wangel! Let me tell you this—tell you in his hearing! I know you can keep me here! You have the power, and no doubt you will use it! But my mind—all my thoughts—all my irresistible longings and desires—these you cannot fetter! They will yearn and strain—out into the unknown—that I was created for—and that you have barred against me!

WANGEL.

[*In quiet grief.*] I see it clearly, Ellida! Step by step you are gliding away from me. Your craving for the limitless and the infinite—and for the unattainable—will drive your mind quite out into the darkness at last.

WANGEL.

Yes,—from the inmost depths of my tortured heart, I mean it.

ELLIDA.

And c a n you do it? Can you carry out your purpose?

WANGEL.

Yes, I can. I can—because of my great love for you.

ELLIDA.

[*Softly and tremblingly.*] And I have come to be so near—so dear to you!

WANGEL.

The years of our marriage have made you so.

ELLIDA.

[*Clasps her hands together.*] And I,—I have been blind to it!

WANGEL.

Your thoughts went in other directions. But now,—now you are set wholly free from me and mine. Now your own true life can return to its—its right groove again. For now you can choose in freedom; and on your own responsibility, Ellida.

ELLIDA.

[*Clasps her head with her hands and gazes fixedly towards* WANGEL.] In freedom—and on my own respon-

sibility? Responsibility! This—this transforms everything. [*The steamer bell rings again.*

THE STRANGER.

Do you hear, Ellida? The bell is ringing for the last time. Come away!

ELLIDA.

[*Turns towards him, looks fixedly at him, and says with determination in her voice.*] I can never go with you after this.

THE STRANGER

You will not go?

ELLIDA.

[*Clings to* WANGEL.] Oh—after this I can never leave you!

WANGEL.

Ellida,—Ellida!

THE STRANGER.

It is all over then?

ELLIDA.

Yes! Over for all time!

THE STRANGER.

I see it. There is something here that is stronger than my will.

ELLIDA.

Your will has no longer a feather's weight with me. For me you are a dead man, who has come home from

sea—and who is returning to it again. But I am no ger in terror of you: you fascinate me no more.

THE STRANGER.

Good-bye, Mrs. Wangel! [*He vaults over the fence.*] nceforth you[1] are nothing but—a bygone shipwreck my life. [*He goes out to the left.*

WANGEL.

[*Looks at her awhile.*] Ellida—your mind is like the :: it has its ebb and flow. What brought the transmation?

ELLIDA.

Oh, do you not understand that the transformation me,—that it had to come—when I could choose in edom.

WANGEL.

And the unknown,—it fascinates you no longer?

ELLIDA.

It neither fascinates nor frightens me. I could have en into it—gone into it—if I had wished to. I was e to choose it; and therefore I was able to reject it.

WANGEL.

I begin to understand you—by degrees. You think d conceive in images—in visible pictures. Your long- g and yearning for the sea—the fascination that he— e stranger—possessed for you—must have been the

[1] Here, for the first time, he uses the formal *De.*

for me. You found,—and you had the courage to use,—the right remedy—the only one that could help me.

WANGEL.

Yes, in the last extremity of danger, we physicians have courage for much.—But now you will come to me again, will you not, Ellida?

ELLIDA.

Yes, my dear, faithful Wangel—now I will come to you again. I can now, for now I come to you in freedom—of my own will—and on my own responsibility.

WANGEL.

[*Looks tenderly at her.*] Ellida! Ellida! Oh,—to think that we two can now live wholly for each other——

ELLIDA.

——and with all our memories in common. Yours—as well as mine.

WANGEL.

O u r s you call them!

ELLIDA.

They are not mine yet—but I shall win them.

WANGEL.

Ours——! [*Kisses her hands joyfully and quickly.*] Oh, I thank you for that word more than I can tell.

HILDA, BALLESTED, LYNGSTRAND, ARNHOLM, *and* BOLETTA *come from the left into the garden. At the same time a number of young townspeople and summer visitors pass along the footpath.*

HILDA.

[*Half aloud, to* LYNGSTRAND.] Just look,—don't she and father look like an engaged couple!

BALLESTED.

[*Who has overheard.*] It is summer time, little miss.

ARNHOLM.

[*Looks towards* WANGEL *and* ELLIDA.] The English steamer is under way.

BOLETTA.

[*Goes to the fence.*] You can see her best from here.

LYNGSTRAND.

The last trip of the season.

BALLESTED.

"Soon will all the straits be ice-bound," as the poet says. It is sad, Mrs. Wangel! And I hear we are to lose you too for a time: you go out to Skioldvik to-morrow, I am told.

WANGEL.

No—that plan has come to nothing; this evening we two have changed our minds.

ARNHOLM.

[*Looking from one to the other.*] Ah,—really!

BOLETTA.

[*Coming forward.*] Father—is this true?

HILDA.

[*Going to* ELLIDA.] Are you going to stay with us after all?

ELLIDA.

Yes, dear Hilda—if you will have me.

HILDA.

[*Struggling between tears and joy.*] Oh,—can you ask —if I will——!

ARNHOLM.

[*To* ELLIDA.] This is really quite a surprise!

ELLIDA.

[*With a grave smile.*] Well, you see, Mr. Arnholm—— Do you remember what we were speaking of yesterday?

When you have once for all become a land-animal—you an never find the way back again—out to the sea. Nor the sea-life either.

BALLESTED.

Why, that's just the case of my mermaid!

ELLIDA.

Very like it, yes.

BALLESTED.

Only with this difference, that the mermaid—s h e dies if it. Human beings, on the contrary—they can acclam -accli—matise themselves. Yes, I assure you, Mrs. Wangel, they c a n ac-cli-matise themselves.

ELLIDA.

Yes, in freedom they can, Mr. Ballested.

WANGEL.

And under full responsibility, dear Ellida.

ELLIDA.

[*Quickly, holding out her hand to him.*] T h a t is the secret.

[*The great steamer glides noiselessly down the fiord. The music is heard closer inshore.*

THE END.

HE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT
This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building